

PLAY

DIGITAL EDITION



EXPLOSIVE DETAILS

GTAV

How Rockstar is reinventing the open world

PS4'S FIRST HIT UNVEILED WATCH DOGS

Ubisoft's next-gen thriller changes everything

VERDICT ON THE PS3'S FINAL FPS MASTERPIECE

ALL-NEW INFO
STREAM PS4 ON VITA
Unite your consoles

SHOCKER!
BUNGIE LOVES PLAYSTATION
Halo dev comes to PS4



DigitalEdition
GreatDigitalMags.com
ISSUE 229

REVIEWED
GOD OF WAR ASCENSION
Kratos rules once more

TECH EXPLORED
PS4'S SCI-FI FUTURE
Games install while you play

ISSUE NO229
INFINITE POSSIBILITIES

PS4 REVEAL SPECIAL

- THE WITCHER 3: WILD HUNT
- INFAMOUS: SECOND SON
- DRIVECLUB
- DESTINY
- KNACK
- THE WITNESS
- DEEP DOWN
- DIABLO III
- PLAYSTATION CLOUD
- NEXT-GEN ENGINES
- DEVELOPER REACTIONS
- EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW!

KILLZONE: SHADOW FALL
Jaw-dropping PS4 sequel



The artwork features a central character, Kenshiro, with a determined expression and a glowing blue aura. Above him is a large, menacing red demon mask with horns. Surrounding the central figure are other characters: a man with a raised fist in the upper left, a woman with purple hair in the lower left, a woman with red hair in the upper right, and a man with long blonde hair in the lower right. The background is a dramatic mix of red and blue flames and smoke.

FIST OF THE NORTH STAR KEN'S RAGE 2

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PS3



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XBOX LIVE

Wii U



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演劇端末 PlayStation 4 PSN PSVita PS3

Welcome **PLAY**

The UK's only independent PlayStation magazine

VERDICT

44 BIOSHOCK INFINITE

We tango with Irrational's daring FPS

REVIEWED

64 GOD OF WAR: ASCENSION

Kratos' experimental prequel on PS3

Next-gen is here



Phew! I thought that generation would go on forever! Just joking, of course. The PS4 reveal is the biggest

thing to happen to the PlayStation brand in a long time, and the consensus is that Sony came out of the announcement singing. Sure, we didn't see the box itself, but that's arguably cosmetic: what we got instead was a full-on sample of what the PS4 experience will entail, and frankly, the line-up of games at the unveiling was superb. We've got the whole thing covered for you in this very issue – 22 pages of analysis from the passionate team at **Play**.

That's not to say the PS3 is down and out, though. Far from it. This month we have two big returns for massive PlayStation franchises – as you'll see, *Tomb Raider* and *God Of War: Ascension* demonstrate that there's still a lot of potential in your so-called ageing hardware. Indeed, it seems that *God Of War* offers an early snapshot at what PS4 games could look like, such is the technical ambition of this beautiful-looking prequel from Sony Santa Monica.

Enjoy the issue and tell me what you think at @PlayMag_UK or @SamuelWRoberts. PS4 offers a limitless opportunity for Sony to be number one again in the console market – and we'll be there to cover it every step of the way, just as we always have. Anyway, time to get back to playing *Metal Gear Rising: Revengeance*; my good friend Sombrero Raiden awaits...

S. Kent

Deputy Editor

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800+ REVIEWS
EVERY GAME ON PS3 & PS VITA RATED!
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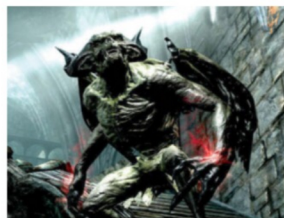
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We love Aliens, we love shooting things. So why don't we love this?

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Too expensive, but undeniably great fun.

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We go in depth with the beautiful FPS



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PLAY EXTRA

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Buy them, buy them all right now.

88 Guide: Beating DmC on Dante Must Die
Don't worry, we've got you covered.

FEATURES

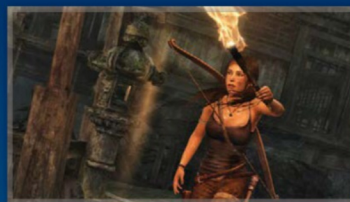
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EXCLUSIVELY ON YOUR DISC

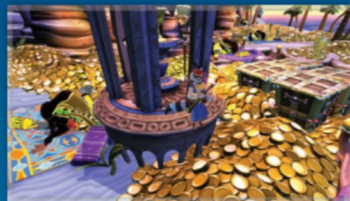
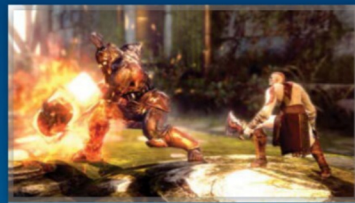


TOMB RAIDER REBOOT

Video review of Lara's gorgeous and ambitious return on PS3. Turns out it plays as good as it looks! Isn't it great when that happens?

GOD OF WAR RETRO VIDEO

With *Ascension* out, we thought we'd revisit the *God Of War* series in this video retrospective thing. Turns out it's a decent series.



VIDEO REVIEWS OF BIG GAMES

Sly Cooper: Thieves In Time, *Aliens: Colonial Marines* and *Fist Of The North Star*: Ken's Rage 2 reviewed in video form.

ALL THE LATEST TRAILERS

Lots of beautiful video stuff for your eyes to look at. Turns out there's a lot of life left in the PS3. We'll show you how much!



SEE THE BACK PAGE FOR MORE!

PS4 IS HERE

PS4 REVEALED: THE FUTURE IS HERE





DOX

COMING 2013

ON 20 FEBRUARY, SONY OFFICIALLY ANNOUNCED PS4 IN WHAT WAS SURELY THE GREATEST PLAYSTATION UNVEILING SINCE THE PS2. GAMES, DETAILS AND MUCH MORE WERE REVEALED – HERE IS EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW. THE FUTURE BEGINS NOW...

Sony had to win big with the PlayStation 4's unveiling. After falling into third place with the PS3, this needed to be Sony's triumphant return, a game-heavy reveal that reaffirmed Sony's commitment to players after a generation that had thrown up frequent difficulties. But it was more than just a good showing for PS4. It was an absolute victory, with forward-thinking social and network features, along with a volley of games that truly showed the potential of this powerful new hardware.

From first-party titles to established franchises, to exclusive support from indie darlings, we were treated to a sample of gaming's next huge hits on PS4, as well as Sony's pro-developer mentality in creating the new console. We had testimonials from the best developers in

the world, and collaborations that were once unthinkable happening before our very eyes. We'd waited over six years for this, and it didn't disappoint.

This console isn't for your non-gamer gran, or a bloated, luxury piece of entertainment for an audience that doesn't exist. It's made for gamers and shaped by developers. Sony has created a machine to please its faithful audience and those creators who weren't as smitten with PS3 – hell, it was even enough to convince *Halo* developer Bungie to come on board, a studio that's notoriously associated with the Xbox brand. That was just one of many thrilling PS4 unveilings, which we'll detail for you here. The best part is, there's so much more to come in the next few months, and we'll be there to guide you through it...

25 THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT PS4

From cloud services to the new controller, tech specs and social integration, the PS4 is packing tons of shiny new features. Here's a breakdown of everything about the new console



THE NEW CONTROLLER

- 01** DualShock 4 packs features – a front-mounted touch pad, rear-mounted lights to interact with a new dual-lens camera, a share button for video capture, refined triggers, rubberised grips and a headphone jack.

RELEASE DATE

- 02** PS4 will launch in time for Christmas 2013. But the console hasn't been confirmed for Europe this year – Shuhei Yoshida says it's 'too early to tell'. Fingers crossed.

PRICE RUMOURS

- 03** PS4 is rumoured to cost between £300-400 in the UK. Rumours pegged the console at the lower end, but pre-orders have listed a £399 pricepoint. No price is confirmed, but this range feels right.

CROSS-GAME CHAT

- 04** At last! Gamers will be able to talk to one another across titles, like the Xbox 360 has done for, um, ages.

SECOND-HAND GAMES

- 05** Contrary to rumours, PS4 will not block used games, says Sony head honcho Shunhei Yoshida. Phew.



CAMERA

- 06** PS4 will utilise a new dual-lens camera that can track the DualShock 4 or a Move controller. Little is known about the device yet, but it's likely to be packed with the console.

ALWAYS ON

- 07** Although PS4 will be built from the ground-up to be as internet-focused as possible, the console won't need to be always online to play games, as confirmed by Shuhei Yoshida.

PLAY EVERYWHERE

- 08** PS4 will not be limited to the living room. From a smartphone, Vita, tablet or PC, players will be able to log in, start challenges and check into their favourite game worlds on the go.

PLAY EVERYTHING

- 09** Sony said in its conference: "Try it for free, share it if you like it, buy it if you love it." It's not known how this will work, but we expect an expanded PS Plus using Gaikai streaming as well as direct downloads for PS4 titles, focusing on getting games into players' hands.

SOCIAL

- 10** PS4 is all about social integration. Not just Facebooking game progress, but uploading videos to the PlayStation store, live-streaming your game and even letting another player remote access your game to help you past a tough boss fight.

VIDEO CAPTURE

- 11** Video capture is going to be as commonplace as screenshot sharing is today. Using a button on the DualShock 4, players can upload footage of their game at any time, without slowing down the game thanks to the system's massive RAM.

LAUNCH TITLES

12 Ubisoft's open-world hack-the-city title *Watch Dogs* is confirmed for PS4's launch, while exclusive FPS *Killzone: Shadow Fall* is going to drop with the console, too, though the rest are set to be confirmed.

REALISTIC FACES

13 Quantic Dreams showed off startling new facial technology, allowing for subtle emotions on characters' faces, like an advanced *LA Noire*.

CREATIVITY-FOCUSED

14 PS4 is the 'creative console,' says *LittleBigPlanet* creators Media Molecule. The new console's capabilities will let developers unleash unbridled creativity – as demonstrated by MM devs moulding 3D models with Move controllers on-stage.

HARDWARE SPECS

15 8GB of GDDR5 RAM (16 times as much as PS3, and a faster read speed per GB), x86 AMD CPU architecture, PC-style structure and an enhanced PC GPU. It's powerful.

INSTANT PLAY

16 PS4 does away with waiting times. 'Start playing a game while the other 20GB downloads,' say Sony devs. No more 'disc-shuffling,' updates or slow loading. Like the smartphone philosophy, PS4 is going to be instant.



NO BACKWARDS COMPATIBILITY

17 It doesn't have it. PS4 won't play PS3 games, at least not via disc. However Sony has announced PS1, PS2 and PS3 games will be streamable via cloud service Gaikai, rolling out in stages.



GAMES

18 *Killzone: Shadow Fall*, *DriveClub*, *InFamous: Second Son*, *Knack*, *Diablo III*, *The Witness*, *Watch Dogs*, *Destiny*, *Deep Down*. It's got games. Also, *Final Fantasy* will be revealed at E3 in some form.

NEW IPS

19 *DriveClub* is a social-focused racer from *Motorstorm* devs Evolution Studios that's been ten years in the planning. *Knack*, a family-friendly fantasy action title, also shows PS4 will bring in new IPs as well as returning franchises.

REDESIGNED PS STORE

20 The new PlayStation store won't just be a shop, but an interactive social hub for uploading videos, chatting to friends and sharing recommended purchases, with the console itself learning your preferences. It's about friends and targeted experiences.

THIRD-PARTY FOCUS

21 PS4 will be supported by hundreds of third parties launching new titles from the get-go, as proven by a laundry list of devs and studios shown off at the PS4 reveal.

CLOUD

22 Gaikai will be essential to PS4, with the capability to play games on remote servers integrated directly into the console's infrastructure. Backwards compatibility as well as PS4 streaming to Vita, and potentially other non-games devices, will be a reality.

VITA STREAMING

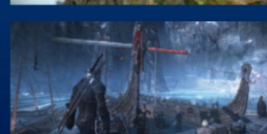
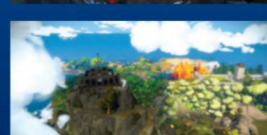
23 Sony's ailing handheld will be able to stream every single PS4 game via cloud service Gaikai, proving Sony is focused on integrating its two latest consoles.

EASY DEVELOPMENT

24 PS4 has been created 'by developers, for developers,' with the console's guts designed around the needs of creators. It should mean less painful development cycles and devs able to harness its power earlier on in the console's life.

BACKGROUND FIRMWARE UPDATES

25 System OS and game patches will download in the background, and not interrupt play, bringing to an end the crushing disappointment of booting a game to sit through a lengthy download. PS4 is built for speed and convenience.



PS4 CONTROLLER: ANALYSIS

The DualShock 4 is the single greatest overhaul the PlayStation control pad has ever had. We'll talk you through it – and there's a lot to discuss...

■ **THE TOUCHPAD** The touchable square on the front of the DualShock 4 is integral to the new pad's innovation. Allowing for Vita-style touch gestures in-game, the pad will make possible finger-solvable puzzles and swipe gestures and generally blend button inputs with handheld innovation.

■ **RUBBERISED GRIPS & LARGER SIZE** The lower half and back of the controller looks to be coated in a rubberised material which will make the pad more comfortable to hold and easier to grip, especially for long periods and interacting with the camera or touchpad.

■ **THE NEW ANALOGUE STICKS** The analogue sticks have been tweaked, with slight concave wells for resting thumbs on – the opposite of the current model's outwardly curved shape. It's a small change, but one which should make for easier, more comfortable control.

■ **HEADPHONE JACK** The pad takes inspiration from the Xbox 360 and puts a listen hole on the bottom – the difference is this is a headphone jack, meaning game audio could be put through headphones just by popping them into the controller by 3.5mm jack (as well as headsets for chat, we assume).

■ **THE OPTIONS BUTTON** Start and Select are dead, replaced with an 'options' button which we expect will serve the purpose of both inputs. Does anyone need separate Start and Select buttons any more? No.

■ **THE SPEAKER** A built-in controller speaker reminds of Wii and could make games more engrossing, with characters talking to you via the pad – or it could push game chat to the pad, separating cross-game conversation from the TV's audio stream.

■ **THE NEW D-PAD** The D-pad has finally had a refresh, slightly more recessed in the centre and promising greater responsiveness, while maintaining its traditional positioning.

■ **THE BLUE LIGHT & THE CAMERA** The glowing blue area on the back of the controller allows the pad to be picked up by the PS4's new dual-lens camera, enabling it to act like a Move controller while it's used as a standard pad – potentially the perfect blend of buttons and motion.

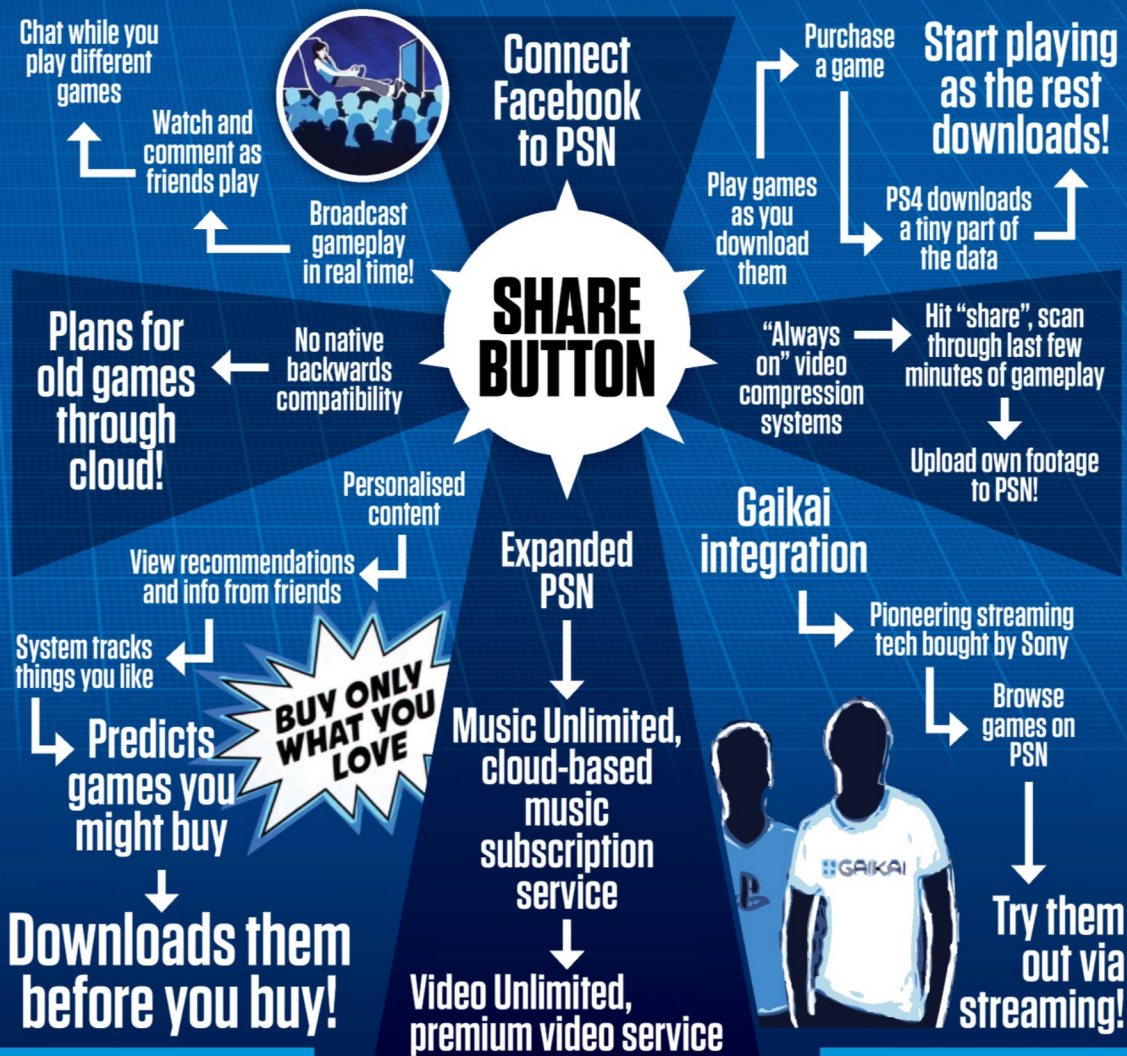
■ **THE NEW TRIGGERS** Complaints about the PS3 triggers have been addressed. All the shoulder buttons have been refined, with the L2 and R2 triggers looking especially upgraded to be more like the 360 pad.

■ **THE SHARE BUTTON** The much-vaunted share button will tie every controller straight into the PS4's core social focus. Allowing video to be instantly captured and uploaded, sharing game experiences will become second nature, literally at the touch of a button.



SHARE: PS4'S DEFINING FEATURE

The share button is your gateway to a multitude of social and cloud features. Take a look and see why the share button might be the most important new element of the PS4...



PS4 TECH DEMOS

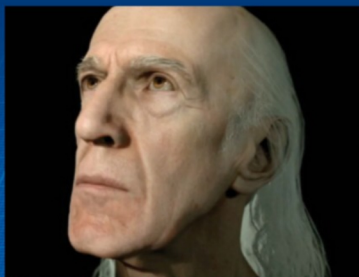
Three of gaming's best and brightest show off what the PS4 can do with fancy visual tech

1. QUANTIC DREAM

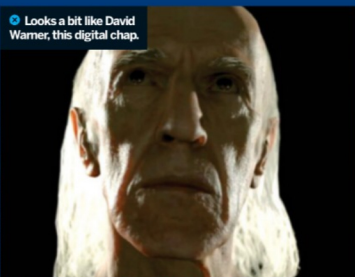
"We are now only limited by our imagination." That's the reality of PS4's power, a point visibly proven by the *Heavy Rain* creator David Cage as he showed off an almost creepily realistic next-gen facial tech.

The old man (in the demo, not Cage) looked alive, eyelids blinking believably over a face taut with individually-moving muscles underneath. "You can see soul, just looking into his eyes. You can imagine who he is, without him saying a word."

PS4 is set to usher in a new era of character development thanks to tech powering every last flicker of emotion in characters' faces, like *LA Noire* with extra realism.



Looks a bit like David Warner, this digital chap.



Media Molecule's PS4 game appears to be powered by magic!

2. MEDIA MOLECULE

PS4's power allows for creativity, not just shiny graphics. That was the clear message from *LittleBigPlanet* creator Media Molecule, who dubbed PS4 'the creative console' before unveiling a litany of tools as proof of their claims.

Alex Evans demoed a Move-powered 3D sculpting tool, allowing players to craft insanely intricate models with Sony's glowing motion stick.

These were then controlled in real-time to make live theatre/musical mash-ups. It's solid proof of how PS4's power, combined with the vast array of tools like Move, PS Eye and DualShock 4, can fuel wild creativity to create something beyond mere graphical ability – eye candy for the soul.

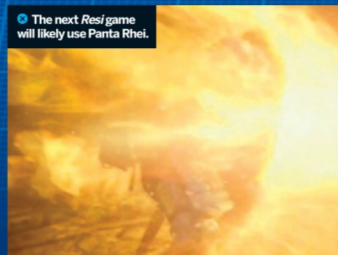
3. PANTA RHEI (CAPCOM)

A dragon unleashes a fiery whirlwind, ripping through a desolate cave while an armour-plated warrior shifts uneasily behind a rock. It's a scene we've seen in games before, but never like this. Powered by Capcom's new Panta Rhei engine, *Deep Down* shows a level of exorbitant depth, from the individual spines on the insanely-textured beast, to the gorgeously lit faces full of expression.

Even lighting is a huge leap forward, bouncing around columns in a believable way, casting alternate shades of light and dark around the room. It's an engine natural, organic and impressive in both macro and micro details, an exciting portent of PS4's future.



The next *Resi* game will likely use Panta Rhei.



WHAT'S NEXT?

HOW THE NEXT YEAR COULD AND SHOULD PLAY OUT FOR PS4

XBOX REVEAL (ESTIMATE)

This is coming soon. The great PS4 reveal will kick Microsoft's arses into gear, most likely with a load of EA titles.

BIG GAME ANNOUNCEMENT

Sony might be sitting on a great exclusive ready to retaliate when the Xbox is revealed.

E3 We'd guess this is where the actual PlayStation 4 will be revealed. Expect a black box of some kind, with a ton more exclusives, including what Studio Santa Monica is working on.

JAN

FEB

MAR

APR

MAY

JUN

JUL

● The success of Vita's Remote Play very much comes down to third-party support.



HOW PLAYSTATION 4 UNLOCKS THE POWER OF PS VITA

How Remote Play suddenly makes your handheld essential

Sony's powerful new home console will unleash the full potential of its powerhouse handheld, by beaming its games straight onto PS Vita without compromise. With this strong support for the Vita, we expect to see it go from strength to strength. Billed as 'the ultimate companion device for PS4', Vita will be able to run PS4 games using Remote Play, a feature first used with PS3 and PSP, but which has grown from a gimmick into a compelling concept.

Sony proved it with *Knack*, the new family-friendly action adventure for PS4, shown running on Vita. The colourful adventure looked great on the handheld's 5"

OLED screen, already packing the touch features of the DualShock 4.

Vita will only be able to stream via the same wi-fi connection, so you won't be able to take your PS4 with you, just yet – but as a second screen, and with the right development support, this could really be a big deal for Vita sales. It doesn't stop at PS4, either. Thanks to Gaikai, Vita could be used to stream PS1, PS2 and PS3 titles as well as your PS4 library: a window into PlayStation's past and present, proving not just the power of PS Vita and PS4, but the PlayStation itself.



PS4

WHAT DON'T WE KNOW

The unanswered questions about PS4...

1 With no native support, how does Sony plan on using Gaikai to stream games? Backwards compatibility is a big issue.

2 How does it let you play games as they are downloading? Wizard magic? It's fascinated us, and we'd love to know more.

3 What kind of uses does the controller's touch pad have? Developers are sure to come up with some imaginative ideas for the new method of input.

4 What is the new user interface like? We know it isn't the XMB from the brief glances we've had so far, but more info is needed.

5 What big exclusives does Sony have up its sleeves? There are plenty more games to come, and we can't wait.

6 What does it look like? Not as important as some would think, but still interesting.

7 How much is it going to cost? This is a huge sticking point for many. Rumours suggest it will be less than the PS3 was at launch. We bloody hope so.

8 When's it coming out? The most important of all. We won't accept anything less than a worldwide roll-out. The days of Europe getting things months later are long gone, right? RIGHT?

■ **GAMESCOM** – Two months after E3, the hype train will be in full swing. Hopefully Sony will have a treat for us. The closer the console gets, the more we will know about it. We want all the specifics! Drown us in knowledge, Sony!

■ **US RELEASE** The console will ship in the US by the end of the year, we don't yet know about Europe.

■ **LAUNCH TITLES** *Watch Dogs*, maybe *Killzone*, definitely EA Sports titles. The rest are up in the air right now.

■ **FINAL BIG PS3 RELEASES** *Beyond* and a few cross-platform releases will make up the PS3's final big Christmas.

■ **HUGE MULTIFORMAT RELEASES** *Dragon Age III*, *Hornetfront 2* and way more have been in development for a while – this is when we'll start to see them trickle in.

AUG

SEP

OCT

NOV

DEC

2014

PLAYSTATION 4: THE INDUSTRY REACTION

Developers had a lot to say about PS4, naturally – some positive, some negative, some funny and some speculative. We rounded up the best soundbites for your entertainment...

“I CAN’T SPEAK FREELY ABOUT PS4, BUT NOW THAT SOME SPECS HAVE BEEN MADE PUBLIC, I CAN SAY THAT SONY MADE WISE ENGINEERING CHOICES”

Id Software founder **John Carmack**

“THERE WAS A TIME WHEN THE SHARED EXPERIENCE MEANT YOUR FRIEND SAT NEXT TO YOU ON THE COUCH. NOW WE CAN PROJECT THAT ACROSS THE GLOBE”

Stig Asmussen, of God Of War studio Sony Santa Monica

“WELL THEN. THAT WAS GOOD. PS4 HERE WE COME! #FINGERSCROSSED”

Velocity developer FuturLab weighs in on the PS4 announcement

“FUN TIMES COMING ^ _ ^”

Crytek’s **Tiago Sousa** on PS4’s 8GB of unified memory

“THIS TIME SONY CAME TO OUR OFFICE AND SAID ‘HERE’S WHAT WE’RE THINKING, WHAT ARE YOU GUYS THINKING? WHAT HAVE YOU BEEN HELD BACK BY? WHAT WOULD YOU DO IF YOU DIDN’T HAVE ANY TECHNICAL LIMITATIONS?’”

Tim Schafer, founder of Double Fine Productions

“ALL THESE DEVELOPERS HAD A HAND IN ACTUALLY HELPING FORM WHAT THE PLAYSTATION 4 WOULD EVENTUALLY TURN OUT TO BE”

Scott Rohde, PlayStation Software Product development head for Sony Worldwide Studios

“THANKS FOR THE GREAT EVENT IN NY @PLAYSTATION – VERY PLEASED WITH THE COMMITMENT TO 8GB OF GDDR5 MEMORY. OTHER SPECS ARE BEAUTIFUL TOO!”

Gearbox's Randy Pitchford

“COOL”

Bayonetta and Devil May Cry genius **Hideki Kamiya**, sharing his personal feelings on the PS4

“THAT’S A WRAP! PS4 IS COMING HOLIDAY 2013”

Sony's official Twitter feed stoking out excitement once more

“AS A LOVER OF NEW IP I’M A BIT BUMMED BY THE LACK OF IT FROM THE PS4 NEWS”

Gears Of War creator **Cliff Bleszinski**

“BECAUSE THE PLAYSTATION 4 SYSTEM IS VERY SIMPLE, IT’S LIKE HAVING A BLANK CANVAS. SO FOR GAME CREATORS, THERE ARE INFINITE POSSIBILITIES TO MAKE WHATEVER THEY WANT TO. IT’S ALL ABOUT WHAT A CREATOR PAINTS ONTO THAT BLANK CANVAS”

Kazunori Yamauchi, head of GT creator Polyphony Digital

“ANNOUNCE A CONSOLE WITHOUT ACTUALLY SHOWING A CONSOLE? THAT’S ONE APPROACH”

Xbox community chap **Larry ‘Major Nelson’ Hryb**

“[PS4] DOESN’T INVOLVE THREE MINUTES OF BOOT-UP AND DISC SHUFFLING AND ALL OF THESE THINGS THAT ARE JUST LIKE A NUISANCE BETWEEN THE IMPULSE TO PLAY A GAME”

Alex Rigopulous, CEO of Harmonix

“IT WOULD HAVE BEEN QUITE AMUSING IF THEY CALLED IT PLAYSTATION 720”

Media Molecule's **Alex Evans**



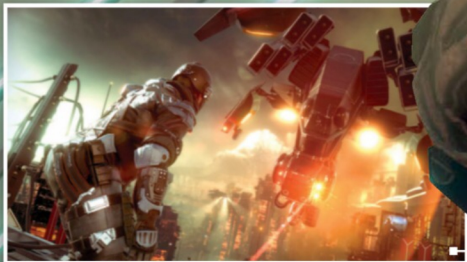
■ SET 30 YEARS after the events of *Killzone 3*, this sees two sides – Helghast and the Vektans – divided by a massive wall. A war begins between them.



● Just as it did with PS3, Guerrilla really shows off Sony's new hardware with the *Killzone* series.



● We can't help but recall the *Mass Effect* series' Citadel, here.



● A little *Mirror's Edge*-style platforming for you to consider...

■ *KILLZONE* OFFERED ONE of the best looks at the kind of graphics PS4 is capable of, and boy was it nice. Remember people, this is early days – it's only gonna get better.

■ **KILLZONE** HAS NEVER been the best FPS around, but it deserves a bit more of a following than it has. Hopefully *Shadow Fall* will grant it some attention.

■ THE HELGHAST ARE definitely back, as we saw in the trailer, with their scary masks and general antisocial behaviour as they blow stuff up and shoot people. Not cool!



PLAYSTATION 4 LAUNCH TITLE

KILLZONE: SHADOW FALL

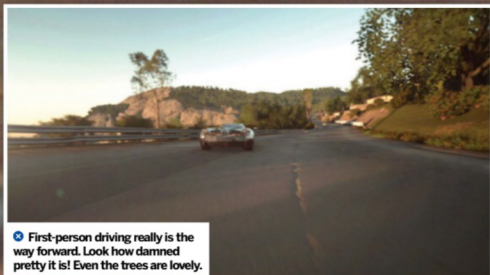
■ **Developer:** Guerrilla Games ■ **Publisher:** Sony

ANOTHER PLAYSTATION, ANOTHER GLORIOUS DEMO

Killzone is back, surprising no-one in particular but still looking pretty darn nice. Guerrilla returns with what it promises will be a launch title, a new *Killzone* with, according to game director Steven ter Heide, "a new world, a new situation and a new hero." A fresh start is a great direction for *Killzone*, a franchise that has never managed to stand out from the pack and garner a huge following. All eyes were on it at the event, though, and man, it looked pretty. Flying over a futuristic city reminiscent of *Mass Effect*'s Citadel, some of the lighting effects and models on display were breathtaking, and when shit inevitably goes down and the bullets start flying, the graphics still held up. Gameplay seems to be standard FPS fare, with lots of explosions, cover-shooting and nasty Helghast who want to kill you. A setpiece towards the end of the demo where the player hangs from a rope trailing from a speeding helicopter is ridiculous in a great action movie way, just the kind of thing we like to see in our shooters. More of that, Guerrilla, and *Shadow Fall* could be one of PS4's first must-have titles.

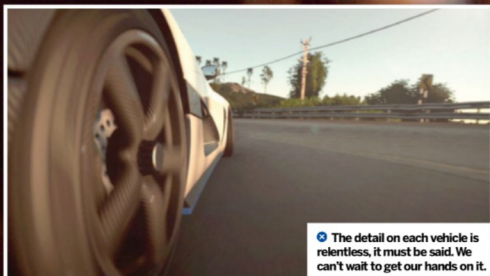


■ WE LOOK FORWARD to seeing how the phone and tablet integration will work – challenging friends and strangers wherever you are sounds great.



■ First-person driving really is the way forward. Look how damned pretty it is! Even the trees are lovely.

■ THE FOCUS ON a first-person experience gets us excited – *DriveClub* looks to be more than a racing game, embodying everything about the driving lifestyle.



■ The detail on each vehicle is relentless, it must be said. We can't wait to get our hands on it.

■ MATT SOUTHERN, HEAD of the studio, described it as the game it has "always wanted to make," claiming it has waited for the technology to catch up to the reality of their vision.

■ MATT SOUTHERN HAD something of a religious experience on stage when it came to describing the detail of the cars in game. This is a title for unashamed car nerds.

■ IF EVOLUTION KNOWS one thing, it's racing. It has decades of experience in the genre, so we know *DriveClub* will play wonderfully.



■ We're not sure if you can still play *DriveClub* in third-person.



TEN THINGS ABOUT

DRIVECLUB

■ Developer: Evolution Studios ■ Publisher: Sony

WE'VE ALREADY BROKEN THE FIRST RULE!

- 1** We were the first ones to make this joke and anyone who tells you anything else is lying.
- 2** It's made by Evolution Studios, the guys who made *MotorStorm*. We know they know how to make a great racing game, which feels us with lovely warm confidence.
- 3** It features a number of real car licences, including BMW, Mercedes Benz, Bentley, Pagani, and loads more.
- 4** It's existed as a concept for ten years, and Evolution actually trademarked the name *DriveClub* nine years ago.
- 5** A large focus is on racing in teams, particularly with your mates – "driving the best cars in the world, in the best places in the world, but crucially, doing it together," says Southern.
- 6** It's built around our "permanently-connected social lives", rewarding you for playing in groups and teams.
- 7** You can set up races and invitations on a mobile phone or tablet.
- 8** Events can accommodate small groups of friends, or thousands of competitors from across the globe.
- 9** Graphics are stupidly detailed – recreated with "obsessive love." Even the direction of every microscopic flake of paint has been modelled with multiple layers.
- 10** "True first-person racing" – opening the door, strapping yourself in, firing up the car – immersion seems like a huge focus.



PLAYSTATION 4 LAUNCH TITLE

WATCH DOGS

Developer: Various Publisher: Ubisoft

WHO LET THEM OUT?

We already saw *Watch Dogs* when it stole the show at last year's E3, and Ubisoft's newest killer franchise made a return at the PS4 presser. We saw more of the central themes of hacking, surveillance and information warfare as protagonist Aiden Pearce (who we swear bears more than a passing resemblance to John Cusack) takes down a bad guy and makes his escape from the encroaching cops. It's amazing stuff – Pearce uses his hacking skills to take control of electronics throughout the city, making traffic blockades pop up and total speeding cop cars, shutting down security cameras, even stopping a train so he can hop on top before starting it up again to make his escape. Pretty handy to have a phone that controls everything, huh? It looks phenomenal, as true to life as any game we've seen yet, and the totalitarian state and inter-connection of people and technology presented seem dangerously close to our reality. *Watch Dogs* is coming to PS3 and 360 as well as Wii U and PC, but you can get that the definitive version, and the only version worth playing, will be on PS4.

■ **WATCH DOGS WAS**, by many people's accounts, the standout game of E3 last year, and we are extremely happy to see it as part of the PlayStation 4 showcase.

■ **THE SETTING IS** a slightly cyberpunk near-future where connected technology and a strict government have cracked down on people's individual freedoms.

■ **HERO AIDEN HAS** a phone capable of hacking into almost everything electronic, from traffic lights to trains. Needless to say, it comes in handy.

■ **WE STILL HAVE** so much to learn about *Watch Dogs*, with only a tentative release date of Q4 2013 given so far.

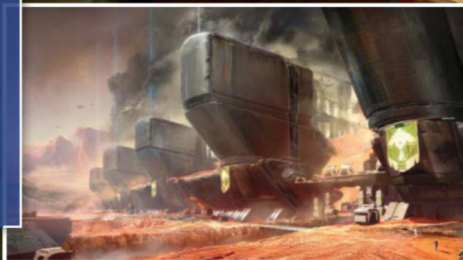


SO DESTINY. EH? WHAT IS IT?

■ Essentially, it's an FPS MMO from the makers of *Halo*. Players exist in a shared hub world and go off to do missions either on their own or in groups. Characters are a specific class and find new armour and weapons as they play.

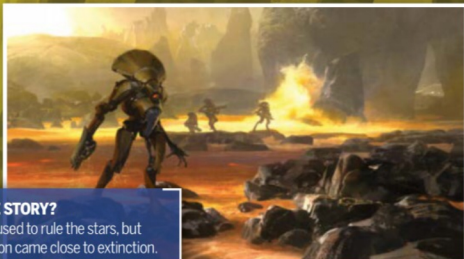
SO, A BIT LIKE THE FIRST GUILD WARS THEN?

■ Yeah, kinda. *Destiny* borrows an idea from *Journey*, in that players in the same area as you can link up with your game via invisible matchmaking, popping up out of the blue to lend a hand. You can then group up with them or just go your separate ways afterwards.



SO, IT'S A SCI-FI FPS FROM THE GUYS THAT MADE HALO? ORIGINAL...

■ Sure, you can be snarky, but Bungie is choosing to evolve and refine what it already knows, and what it knows is how to make great FPS games. Was anyone really expecting a fantasy platformer?



WHAT'S THE STORY?

Humanity used to rule the stars, but for some reason came close to extinction. They were saved by the Traveller, a huge white orb of alien origin that now floats above the final human city. Humanity has redeveloped some lost technology and sets out to reclaim the solar system, now controlled by various hostile aliens.

HALO CREATORS COME TO PLAYSTATION

DESTINY

Developer: Bungie Publisher: Activision

THE FPS-MMO WITH PS4 EXCLUSIVE CONTENT

Since saying goodbye to *Halo* and parting ways with Microsoft, anticipation has been rife for news of the next project from uber-developers Bungie. For a while we've known its name – *Destiny* – but little else. Now the wait is over, Bungie finally revealing some precious details.

Destiny is going to be a first-person, "shared-world" shooter – kind of like an MMO, but not quite. The setting is a post-apocalyptic Earth. Humanity has been pushed to the brink of extinction by some cause we don't yet know, only saved at the last second by the extraterrestrial "Traveller" a huge white orb that now floats over the last remaining human city. Over time, humans have regained some technology and set out once again to reclaim their lost solar system, now rife with hostile alien activity. Players control a Guardian, warriors infused with some of the Traveller's power, as they fight to reclaim lost frontiers.

Players live in a shared, online hub where they can interact, trade, and group up for missions, before flying off to a number of different locations to do some exploring. Character growth is permanent across all modes and customisation options will be abundant, Bungie claims. Guardians come in a variety of classes, such as the powerful Vanguard or the "magic"-wielding Warlock. Sounds pretty *Warcraft*, huh? Players will also be able to own their own spaceship, with aerial combat implied to play some part in the game.

With only a little gorgeous gameplay footage to speak of, narrative director Joseph Staten gave an anecdote that lends us the clearest idea yet of what to expect. Staten and a friend team up for a mission, flying to Mars in his ship. There, the pair find "the bones of a lost human civilisation", an ancient city from the times before everything went to pot. Unfortunately, Mars is controlled by the Cabal, huge rhino-like creatures covered in armour. One thing leads to another, and after some gunfighting, the two are on their last legs. Lucky for them, a mysterious female player speeds in on a vehicle, turning the tide and helping them survive. Players drifting in and out of your game sounds a bit like indie hit *Journey* from last year.

This is made possible by Bungie's invisible, behind-the-scenes matchmaking, linking the players in the same area so they end up interacting with each other. The new player tags along with the pair and the two complete their mission. Staten earning a new unique weapon for his troubles. Quests with loot at the end? It certainly sounds like an MMO to us, not that that's a bad thing. We love *Halo*, we love good MMOs, and a combination of the two sounds like something we'd come up with in a dream.

Bungie has promised that the entire game will be playable solo but will require a constant internet connection regardless. They have also made very clear that there will be no subscription fee to play.

We've heard a lot about co-op, but competitive, player-vs-player online play will also be returning. The best part, though? The PlayStation versions will get exclusive content. A Bungie game with a focus on PlayStation! What a strange new world we live in, eh?



WHAT'S IT ON?

Destiny will be released on PS3 and Xbox 360, as well as PS4. When? We have no idea. There will be no subscription fee, but it is being published by Activision, so expect plenty of map-based DLC releases, as it's an FPS.

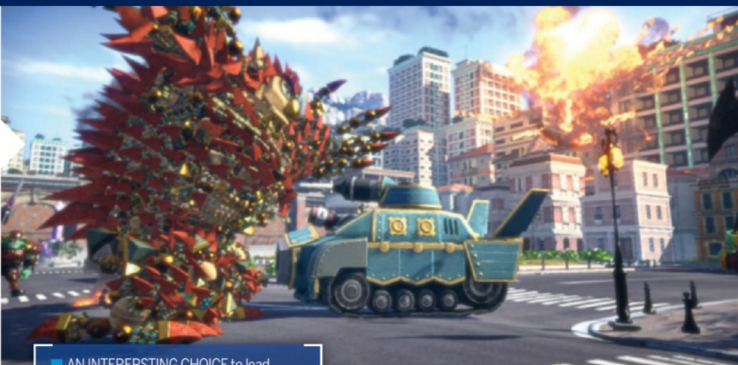
KNACK

Developer: SCEJ Publisher: Sony

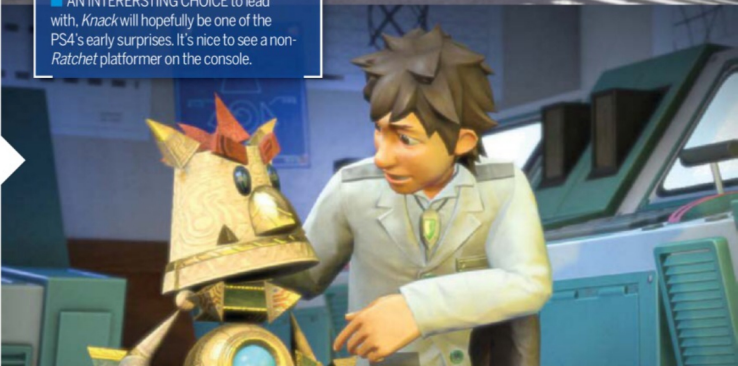
DON'T KNOCK IT!



The first game announced was a new franchise from Sony Japan Studio called *Knack*. Set in a colourful, cartoony world where goblins and humans are at war, players control the titular robot who is capable of exponentially growing in size by absorbing matter around him. He starts off as a cute little guy who couldn't threaten our nans, but give him the opportunity and suddenly he's bigger than a house and punching you in the face. The little gameplay we've seen looks to be standard action-platformer fare in a *Skylanders* vein, strolling through bright levels and smashing up the hordes of goblins in your path. The Pixar-style graphics look wonderful, with some of the animation in cutscenes perfectly mimicking the kind of thing you see in blockbuster CGI films. Along with SCE Japan, famed developer Mark Cerny, who had a hand in such PlayStation hits as *Crash Bandicoot*, *Spyro* and *Uncharted*, is directing and designing *Knack*. If it can evoke the same simple wonder that first exploring *Crash Bandicoot* can, we might be onto a winner with *Knack*. It might not appeal to everyone, but kids, and adults who never really grew up (that includes us here at **Play**) should have a ton of fun.



■ AN INTERESTING CHOICE to lead with, *Knack* will hopefully be one of the PS4's early surprises. It's nice to see a non-*Ratchet* platformer on the console.



■ A SURPRISE RETURN for the moderately popular *InFamous* series that essentially amounts to a reboot. An open world exclusive to be excited about.



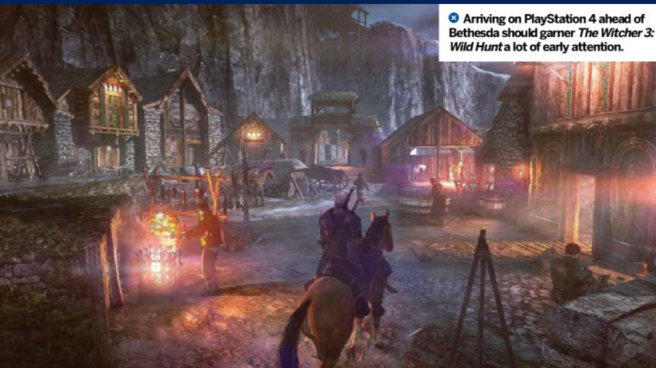
INFAMOUS: SECOND SON

Developer: Sucker Punch Publisher: Sony

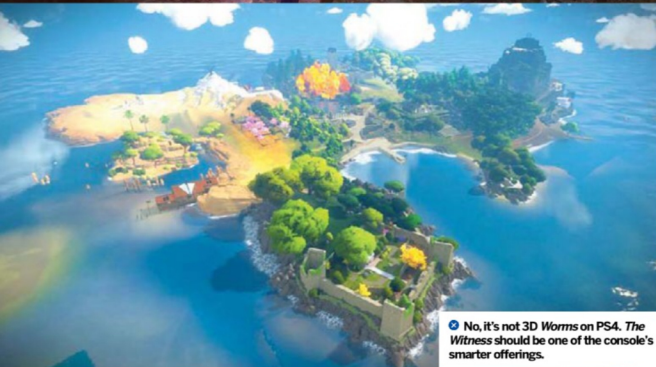
MORE LIKE SECOND FUN



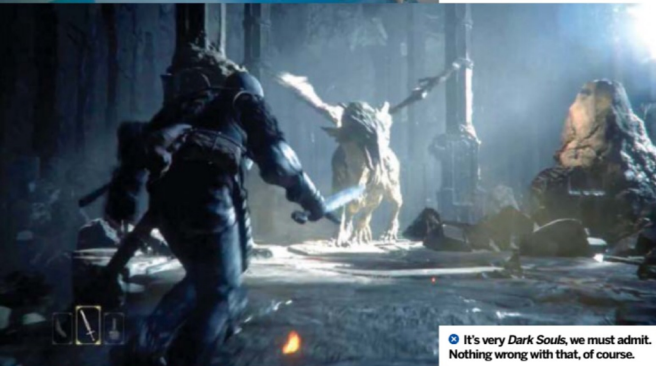
Sucker Punch is back with a new *InFamous* game for next-gen, but Cole McGrath and his lightning powers are nowhere to be seen. Instead we have *InFamous: Second Son*, set a few years after *InFamous 2* with a new hero, Delsin Rowe (we know, it's a terrible name.) The themes of *Second Son* seem to be similar to those of *Watch Dogs* – constant surveillance, a lack of freedom, taking back control of your own life – except this time, the guy you play as has superpowers! Delsin is a 24-year-old convinced he's destined for greatness but lacking direction, until a chance accident imbues him with superhuman powers. The world has changed since *InFamous 2* and anyone showing signs of being a "bio-terrorist" is immediately handed in to the government to ensure the events of Empire City and New Marais never repeat themselves. Delsin decides he isn't going to go down quietly and the rest is elementary. We didn't see any gameplay, but we'd imagine something similar to the previous games with some lovely next-gen twists. It's set in Seattle and promises lots of familiar, real-world landmarks, a first for the series, which should help it feel more grounded and lend more gravitas to the themes it aims to convey.



● Arriving on PlayStation 4 ahead of Bethesda should garner *The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt* a lot of early attention.



● No, it's not 3D *Worms* on PS4. *The Witness* should be one of the console's smarter offerings.



● It's very *Dark Souls*, we must admit. Nothing wrong with that, of course.



● Blizzard coming to PlayStation 4 is a pretty big deal, even if *Diablo III* itself got a mixed reception on PC.

THE WITCHER 3: WILD HUNT

■ Developer: CD Projekt RED ■ Publisher: TBA

ONE OF THE BEST RPG SERIES FINALLY COMES TO PLAYSTATION

CD Projekt RED is one of our favourite developers here at **Play**, with its two excellent *Witcher* RPGs on PC and 360, but it has yet to grace a Sony console with its presence. That all changes with *The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt*, confirmed to be coming to PS4 when it releases in 2014. Once again following the eponymous *Witcher*, Geralt, CDPR is promising an RPG on unparalleled scope and depth. Considering its track record, we can't help but believe it. Hopefully this means the developer's upcoming *Cyberpunk 2077* will also be coming to our new console.

THE WITNESS

■ Developer: Jonathan Blow ■ Publisher: TBA

WE CAME, WE SAW, WE BOUGHT THE T-SHIRT

Jonathan Blow, famous for creating the time-bending indie smash-hit *Braid*, has been hard at work the last few years on his next game, *The Witness*. Based around solving puzzles on an island (*Myst*, anyone?) we don't know much else about *The Witness* yet besides the fact it looks lovely and has a great team behind it. We love that Sony is maintaining its focus on indie development, giving it time to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with the huge triple-A titles. *The Witness* has been in development for some time now, so it shouldn't be too much longer. May this mark the start of a prosperous partnership between the PS4 and indie developers everywhere!

DEEP DOWN

■ Developer: Capcom ■ Publisher: Capcom

DOWN DOWN, DEEPER AND DOWN

Capcom game producer Yoshinori Ono, famous for recently revivifying the *Street Fighter* franchise, visited the Sony conference to show off both a new engine, known as "Panta Rhei" (ancient Greek for "everything flows") and a game to demonstrate it, with the working title *Deep Down*. This looked like a dark fantasy game reminiscent of *Dark Souls*, with two armour-clad dudes duking it out with a dragon in a dark dungeon. It's hard to tell how much of what we saw was actual gameplay, but the beautiful visuals, bleak tone and intense action were enough to get our juices flowing.

DIABLO III

■ Developer: Blizzard ■ Publisher: Activision Blizzard

DUNGEON-CRAWLING FROM THE PC MASTERS

Despite being a multi-billion-dollar success, Blizzard has never before published a game on a console, their one dalliance away from PCs before (*Starcraft: Ghost*) being cancelled long before it ever saw the light of day. Teaming up with Blizzard is a big deal for Sony, and although a *Diablo III* port might not sound like the most exciting thing in the world, what it signifies is pretty fantastic. Blizzard has got a lot of interesting stuff in the pipeline, and if it all comes to PS4 as well as PC, there are going to be a lot of happy gamers.

PLAYSTATION 4: THE PLAY VERDICT

Play's Samuel Roberts believes this was a huge step in the right direction for Sony...

It was the best console unveiling I've ever seen. Usually these are stiffly corporate affairs followed by a hardware reveal and a few tech demos – they're never that exciting or even informative, really, but Sony went all out in declaring the functionality of the console and the philosophies with which it was built, though the software revealed still stopped short of blowing me away.

I was pleased that Sony secured many top names for the event, and that most of them unveiled original titles or at least showed us new footage of existing projects. Opening with *Knack* seemed like an odd choice, but once we hit the demo of the always technically marvellous *Killzone*, the excitement started to ramp up. The level of detail and standard of effects was just incredible as Guerrilla showed off the location that *Shadow Fall* is set in; clearly, the look of the Citadel in *Mass Effect* had an influence, there.

The Share stuff isn't really for me, but I see the value of integrating such Big Brother-esque social features, given the democratic nature of this YouTube age. The DualShock has been due a redesign for some time, now. The most encouraging sign from the whole conference was Sony's attitude to consumers and developers, however – the PS4 was built with both crowds in mind, whereas the angle of the PS3's reveal a few years ago had something of an exclusive member's club vibe that doesn't really sit well with people who only have so much to spend on games. They got the approach just right, and I can't wait to see how this feeds into Sony's no doubt epic E3 conference in June.

It's trendy (and I mean this in the loosest sense; no-one in a single UK pub would give a shit) to say that Jonathan Blow's *The Witness* was the only really amazing thing at the conference, but that's simply untrue. We all value what triple-A experiences bring to home consoles, and while we're a long way from seeing what PS4 can do to enhance the design of these core titles, we got a taste of how Sony and third-party publishers will match our next-gen expectations.

MOST WANTED GAME WATCH DOGS

I sense this being Ubisoft's *Assassin's Creed* equivalent for PS4 – a series destined to become a yearly fixture that's already sold people on concept alone. Technically, this looks fantastic, and Ubisoft's had a good track record in recent years.

MOST IMPRESSIVE PS4 FEATURE REMOTE PLAY

I never got to grips with it on PSP because so few games were compatible – if Remote Play is compatible with the majority of PS4 titles on Vita, that's extremely impressive and a good use for the machine.

WHAT I NEED TO KNOW NEXT

Naughty Dog, Team Ico, Studio Santa Monica, Quantic Dream – tell me what you're working on! And what's Guerrilla's new IP? It's all about the exclusive game reveals for me at E3.

"WE GOT SOMETHING PRETTY GREAT"

Play's Sam Smith collects his thoughts on the future of PlayStation...

Welcome to the future, everyone. Soon we will own a console that lets us play games before they are downloaded, upload gameplay footage with a couple of button presses, watch friends playing games wherever they are, and even download games we want before we know we want them. Incredible.

It's fair to say I was concerned, though. Sony ballsed it up with the PS3 reveal and it felt the repercussions for years afterwards. Between giant enemy crabs, massive damage, *Riiiidge Racer* and "\$599 US dollars", the first couple of years of the PS3 were a marketing disaster, and the console suffered for it.

Sony have done a great job of earning back the favour of gamers over the last few years, and thankfully that approach has extended to the PlayStation 4. With the huge boom in casual gaming over the last generation, I was worried that Sony would go after this market and ignore their core userbase, but I couldn't have been more wrong. The press conference revolved almost totally around games and the core experience of playing them. Indeed, "play" (I like that word, not sure why) seemed to be the theme of the evening, crossing the lips of several speakers.

The only real downsides for me were a few games that I just didn't care about. *Knack* looks fine for kids but it leaves me cold; I'm not enough of a car nerd to get excited about *DriveClub*; and I have never, and still don't, given anything of a crap about *Killzone*.

Otherwise, *Watch Dogs* still looks phenomenal, Jonathan Blow's *The Witness* looked lovely, and despite a lack of details, I'm extremely excited about *Destiny*. Sure, it's basically a *Halo* MMO (from the sound of it) but I love both of those things.

I like the pad redesign, and the new triggers look much better. I wish the left stick and D-pad had been switched Xbox-style, but you can't win them all. Hopefully the pad is a bit weightier this time too.

I'm surprised at how happy and positive I feel with what we've seen so far – I wasn't sure what to expect and we got something pretty great. Can't wait to see where we go from here.

MOST WANTED GAME DESTINY

I'm a massive Bungie fan and the idea of an MMO *Halo* gets me almost uncontrollably excited. What we've heard so far has already been enough to make this one of my most anticipated games.

WHAT I NEED TO KNOW NEXT

The same stuff as everyone else – a price, what it looks like, what else it can do, and most importantly, a date. More game reveals too, of course.

MOST IMPRESSIVE PS4 FEATURE PLAY A GAME AS IT DOWNLOADS

The fact that you can play a game as it downloads. Mind-blowing. I'd love to know more of the specifics behind how this works – does it use Gaikai streaming, or something else?

PREVIEWS

The games that will shape the future of gaming



RELEASE DATE: APRIL

Injustice: Gods Among Us

Could Catwoman beat Superman in a fight? Somehow, yes

PS3

First things first: this is a fighting game in which you can summon *murder cars* as a super move. If you're playing as Batman, that is, and we're guessing that a lot of you will be.

Bats chucks down a smoke bomb, electrocutes his opponent with two tasers (because one often isn't enough) and then, to add injury to injury, summons the Batmobile to screech across the screen at top speed and flatten them. It's like an *Eidolon* with wheels. It doesn't matter where you are – on top of a building, in the centre of the Fortress of Solitude, floating in an orbital space station above the earth – push down those shoulder buttons and the Batmobile magically screeches into view. Somehow.

Injustice is by NetherRealm Studios, the team behind *Mortal Kombat*, and it shows. This is gloriously overblown

stuff. The Flash runs a quick circuit of the globe to build up momentum on an uppercut. Superman punches his opponents into space and then, crucially, back down to earth. Not so bad when you're pummelling the robotic Cyborg or the immortal giant Solomon Grundy, but when you're subjecting Harley Quinn to extra-terrestrial GBH it can feel like overkill.

And this game is overkill. Pure, unadulterated overkill. It plays, appropriately, like someone with a cocaine habit as serious as their comics obsession spat out four hundred of the best ideas they could muster in a single sitting and then crafted that into a game without sleeping once. Everyone is fighting everyone, all the time, in the most spectacular fashion available.

The fighting style has a lot in common with the recent *Mortal Kombat* reboot, even aside from the

bone-crunching violence and nifty camera angles – various flavours of light, medium and heavy attack make up the bulk of a character's moveset, coupled with a handful of specials and those aforementioned car-summoning gravity-punching super-moves. The supers are powered by a separate Super meter, not unlike the EX meter from *Street Fighter*, which recharges as you pull off combos or get punched in the face. They give bad players a bit of an edge, as standard, and good players an excuse to showboat.

Taking control of the characters is fairly intuitive and, above all else, enjoyable – within a few minutes we were pulling off juggle combos and dodging enemy attacks without much of a problem. So that's nice. If you're into your frame counts and hitboxes, there's the option to delve deeply into the mechanics too, but there's still plenty for the casual enthusiast of elaborate violence to get into.

With a tap of a button, you unleash each characters' unique special

ability which power up as they fight: in Batman's case, it was a swarm of Batarangs that bother the enemy at range. There's a wide variety of stuff on offer, here. Superman gets even more powerful for a few seconds. The Green Arrow shoots – yep – green arrows at folk. The Flash moves so fast that he slows down time for his opponent, and Harley Quinn pulls out a picture of the Joker and gives it a kiss. Not sure what effect that had, to be honest.

Hold off using them and they get better – Batman goes from one ineffectual Batarang to four, for example, and the Green Arrow's projectiles cycle through a variety of funky effects. None of his trademark boxing-glove arrows, though, as far as we could see, which seems like a fairly major oversight. Maybe they'll be put in as DLC.

Finally, for the full superhero stand-off effect, players can initiate a Clash – after a brief series of close-ups and exchanging of words, both players secretly bid up to three sections of their



❖ Not to sound childish, but waaah we want a slinky cat that brings us diamonds.



❖ Fun fact: The Flash actually earned his superhero name by exposing himself in parks.



❖ Hey, Aquaman, good luck summoning enough catfish to defeat Batman, loser.

Super-meter and, following a slow-motion smackdown, to the victor go the spoils. "Spoils" in this case being extra damage for an attacker or a health boost for a defender. While it might not necessarily be what you'd look for in a frantic fighting game like this one, it certainly fits the superhero theme.

Each arena – of which there are around fifteen, including the ruins of Superman's hometown Metropolis, the orbital space station Watchtower and so on – has two or three distinct areas chiefly unlocked by kicking your opponent through adjoining walls and following along behind. The transition animations are not only high-damage combos but a return to that over-the-top violence; to go from the Metropolis streets to the roof of a nearby building, for example, you'll knock your opponent through five painful stories of office blocks before they land.

Scattered around the arenas are a variety of dangerous objects that can be used to your advantage, and each type of character will interact with them in



❖ We'd be massively surprised if this turns out worse than AVP.

PREVIEW

SLAP ME SILLY

The PS has a history of fighting games that are perhaps a little daft

PS ALL-STARS BATTLE ROYALE

Like *Smash Bros*, but not. Totally not at all. Totally different. *PSASBR* featured comedy characters such as cake enthusiast Fat Princess and novelty singing dog PaRappa the Rapper alongside serious types like Raiden and Heihachi Mishima.

STREET FIGHTER X TEKKEN

This mashup of the two brawlers resulted in a strange experience where none of the *Tekken* characters could sidestep and all of the *Street Fighters* looked a little too 3D. Still, fun in all the right places.

MARVEL VS CAPCOM 3

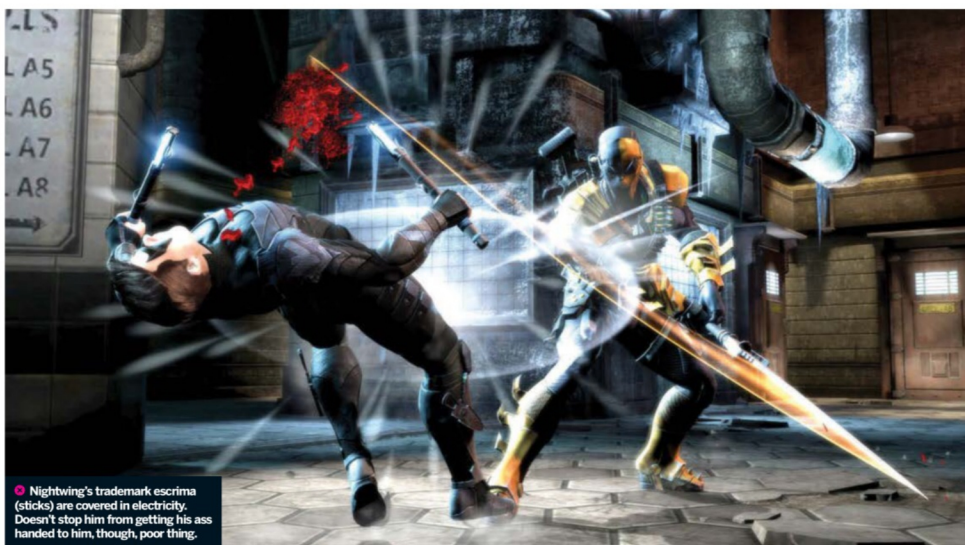
Want to have a Godwolf fight a giant mutant-hunting robot? To have Albert Wesker knock the tar out of Doctor Doom? *MvC3* can sort that out, as it boasted one of the most imaginative rosters ever seen in a fighting game that wasn't running on MAME.

MORTAL KOMBAT VS DCU

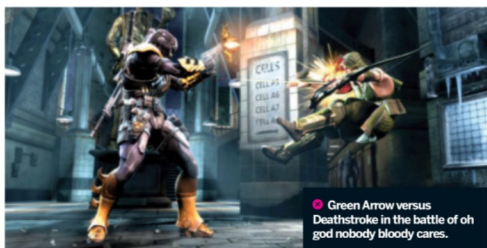
Pairing the bloodthirsty lunatics of the *MK* Earthrealm with the clean-cut superheroes of the DC Universe left the fatalities kinda toothless. What's Sub-Zero without his Spine Rip, eh? Just a nippy bloke in blue pajamas.

SOULCALIBUR IV

SoulCalibur didn't make a lot of sense to begin with – how come no-one dies or even bleeds when they're hit with those honking great swords? – but adding Lord Vader to the mix showed that Captain Logic was definitely not steering this tugboat. Parrying lightsabres? Oh, please.



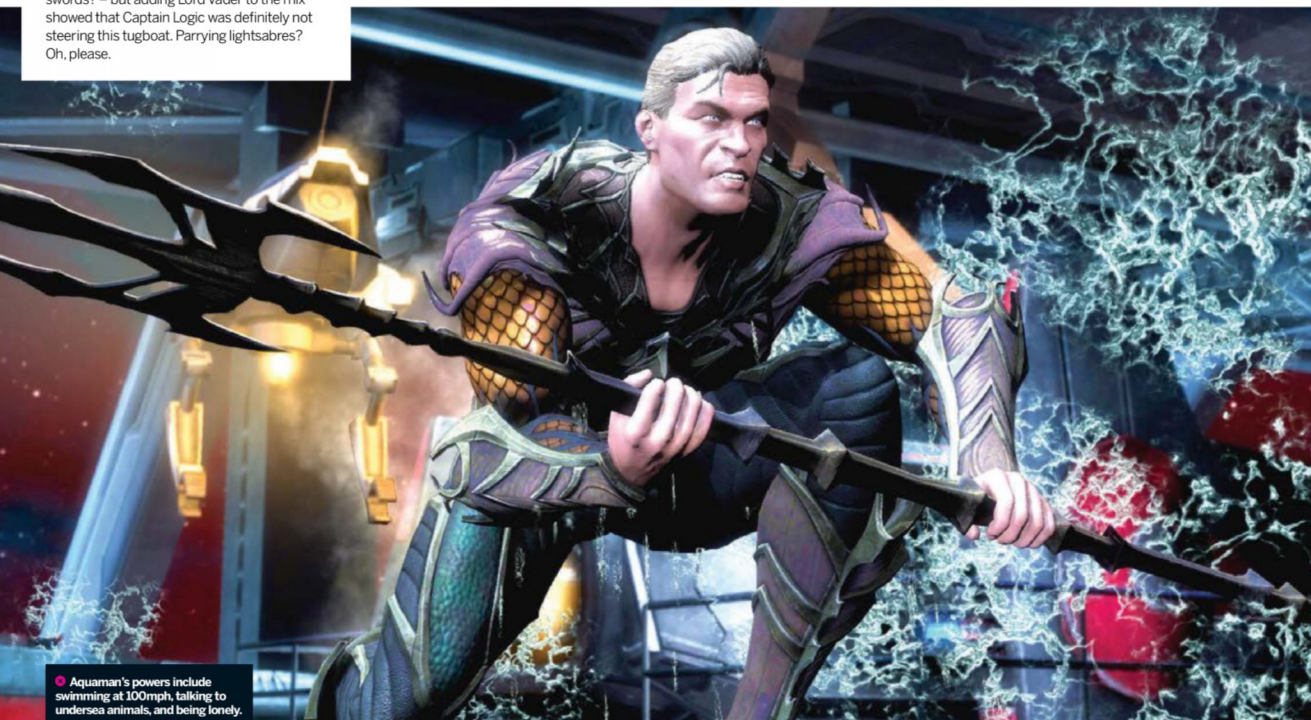
● Nightwing's trademark escrima (sticks) are covered in electricity. Doesn't stop him from getting his ass handed to him, though, poor thing.



● Green Arrow versus Deathstroke in the battle of oh god nobody bloody cares.



● Deathstroke carries at least seven guns on him at all times, despite having only two hands.



● Aquaman's powers include swimming at 100mph, talking to undersea animals, and being lonely.

SNUH! BORT!



● Catwoman is probably one of our favourites, BECAUSE SHE'S GOOD AT FIGHTING AND FOR NO OTHER REASON.

➤ different ways. While Superman might pluck a flying car out of the sky and jam it bonnet-first into his opponent's face – sporting! – Batman will blow up the same car with a bomb and let the falling wreckage do the talking. Elements vary from things you can drop on people to carelessly huge red buttons that trigger spaceship exhausts to honking great lumps of crystal you can swing about to send the Green Arrow flying towards the back wall of the Fortress of Solitude like a baseball in eyeliner and a stupid hat.

The single-player campaign starts with an introduction that features pretty much every DC superhero you can imagine having one big fight that stretches from the surface of the earth all the way to space. When they appear onscreen, there seems to be a rule that either they or another character must mention them by name within three seconds so we know who they are, in case of confusion. The characters are voiced like their actors were reading their lines in separate rooms several years apart from one another.

But for all the janky acting and insistence on setting fights in big empty patches of sky, the cutscenes and the fights flow together very well, lending

play a sort of breathless quality that you don't commonly find in the genre as you're shoved between fights without so much as a loading screen. Single-player puts you in charge of Batman, everyone's favourite superhero-who's-not-really-a-superhero, and follows his quest to stop world devastation via the medium of punching.

The plot, then, in a nutshell – quiff-owner and walking wardrobe malfunction Superman is understandably upset after Lois Lane and his unborn son are killed in a nuclear explosion, so goes all-out mental and decides to form a new world order. As you do. Batman, ever the calm-headed diplomat, decides to form a resistance force against this injustice (geddit?) and can somehow stand toe-to-toe with Supes and co in a fight for reasons that weren't adequately explained. Maybe he handed around kryptonite sandwiches before everything kicked off?

Batman's first fight is against Deathstroke – think Marvel's merc-with-the-mouth Deadpool but with none of the charm and you're pretty much there – and the second is against the freakish giant and chemically-altered Luchador

Bane, before moving onto a scrap with Superman's baldy nemesis Lex Luthor.

After defeating Bane, Batman can swing the battle in his favour by throwing a bunch of batarangs at Luthor via an over-the-shoulder quick-time event; hitting all the buttons in order knocks down Luthor's health bar a bit before the fight starts. It wasn't clear how often QTEs would spring up in the game, but here's hoping they're rare.

Multiplayer is, of course, more fun than the single-player campaign because this is a fighting game and those are the rules. The characters split into two rough camps – big, strong types like Superman, Wonder Woman, Solomon Grundy, and Cyborg, and smaller, nippy folks like Nightwing, the Flash, and Harley Quinn. Batman sits in the middle, brooding appropriately, which seems like a good place to be for the "main" character.

Strong characters are slow by default – even Superman – which can take a little getting used to; while projectiles don't feature heavily, the range of a character's attacks can differ wildly depending on input so positioning and speed can be deceptively important. The limited roster available to us

seemed to rely on that split over anything else, and – disappointingly – characters often didn't feel remarkably different to others in the same group.

Combat's fairly tight, but there's something inescapably *Mortal Kombat* about that that suggests this is a game focused more on entertainment than mastery; there's not the hair's breadth precision you'd find in a Japanese title, nor the breadth of fighting styles, and a lot of bombast. But sometimes accessibility is what you're after.

It's not without moments of wide-eyed joy, either. When playing as the psychotic Harley Quinn, there's something to be said for mashing Superman's face in with a giant hammer, knocking him underneath a falling spaceship and sending him crashing through the floor to an engine room eight floors below.

And that's *NetherRealm* all over, that is. *Injustice* is a game built around a series of moments of grand, epic-scale violence that are so brutal and so elaborate that the mach-5 slapstick of them makes you laugh out loud involuntarily. The sense of fun is inescapable, and the title already carries such massive flair that it's hard not to be excited to see what the rest of it holds, even if it's just bigger and better explosions. We love those.

Injustice: Gods Among Us is being developed by NetherRealm Studios. Find out more details (and watch some daft videos) at www.injustice.com

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- It's like *Mortal Kombat*, but with DC comic book characters in.
- So, in theory quite a lot like *Mortal Kombat* vs DC Universe. But not really.
- Features excellently-drawn versions of all your favourite superheroes. And Aquaman.
- Has Superman as a kind of bad guy, which is an interesting take on the superpatriot.

READ ME

DC superheroes knock the tar out of each other in increasingly elaborate ways for a) your amusement b) personal pride and c) to save/destroy the world, or something.

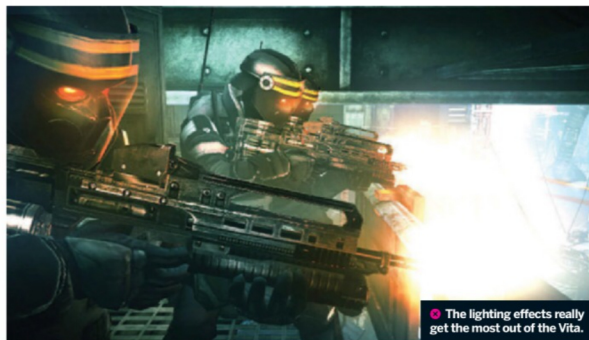


Like most Vita versions of big console games, expect shorter levels.

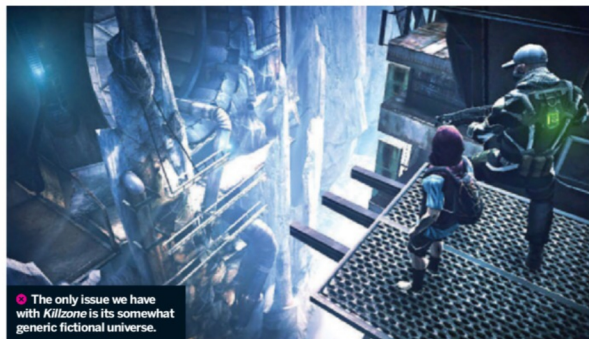
RELEASE DATE: TBA 2013

Killzone: Mercenary

Follow the money



The lighting effects really get the most out of the Vita.



The only issue we have with Killzone is its somewhat generic fictional universe.

VITA'S DROUGHT

Why we need Killzone now

DESPITE HAVING A very strong line-up so far, the Vita's schedule is actually pretty sparse going into the rest of the year. Between *Killzone* and *Tearaway*, we get to see two of Sony's best first-party developers experimenting with the console's tech in creative and refined ways, which is exactly what the console needs. Now we just need to see more third-party support for the Vita – that's the real struggle for Sony.

VITA We wondered for a little bit why *Killzone* on Vita fell off our radar, and then we remembered – the one-two horseshit-stained punch that was *Resistance: Burning Skies* and *Call Of Duty: Black Ops Declassified* put us off the idea of PS3's best FPS franchises coming to Vita, just because the two Nihilistic-produced titles systematically removed what was interesting about both properties. *Killzone: Mercenary*, however, is a full-fledged *Killzone* title developed by Guerrilla itself as well as companion studio Guerrilla Cambridge, built on the same impressive technology that debuted the PS3's power to begin with.

Mercenary has a campaign that will last roughly six to eight hours, taking place in the same timeframe as the second and third games. We won't go into the story in too much depth, since discussing the mythology of the *Killzone* universe is basically like talking about *Universal Soldier*'s mythos; nobody's that interested. The twist here is that you're playing as Arran Danner, a mercenary who follows the cash, which takes him between both the bad guy space-Nazi Helghast and nice chaps

the UCA, offering players a snapshot of both sides of this epic conflict.

That could potentially offer some interesting story-based scenarios in the campaign, which is carrying over and actually building upon the ideas established in the home console *Killzones*, primarily the *Half-Life 2*-beating AI and a freer mission structure. The levels unveiled so far offer more than one route through environments, and for once stealth can be properly employed as a tactic throughout these story bits. It won't be open-ended, but Guerrilla has taken healthy inspiration from sandbox-style games.

Then, of course, there's the other stick of dynamite in *Killzone*'s belt: good looks. *Killzone*'s universe might not be the most involving, but it has always taken us to locales that look better than almost anything else running on PlayStation technology; this is no exception. Built using the same engine, the Vita's power actually impressed Guerrilla to the point where they discovered they'd initially underestimated its capabilities. You can see the screens – it's one of the first Vita games that actually manages to look

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- Actually looks like the PS3 *Killzone* titles
- Shorter burst type of play for when you're on the go

- It's not made by Nihilistic. YAY
- Multiplayer bundled in, too

KILL! IN A ZONE!



like a high-end PS3 title. For showcasing the technology alone, *Killzone: Mercenary* is worth keeping an eye on.

Then there's the rather exciting prospect of having the Vita's first decent multiplayer shooter. With eight players per level, it appears *Killzone* is gunning for a *Call Of Duty* audience with the dynamic established within that figure, as opposed to the overpopulated and brilliant choke points that mark the peak of *Killzone's* brilliant online modes on PS3. There's also a card-collecting aspect to it, as well as scaleable leaderboards that mean it's harder for players to stay at the top. Finally, a shooter that could be worthy of Vita's two comfortable, brilliant analogue sticks, made by people who actually know what they're doing within this genre.

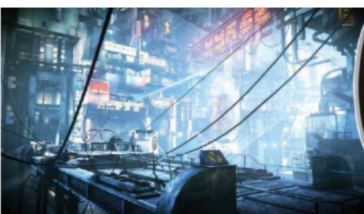
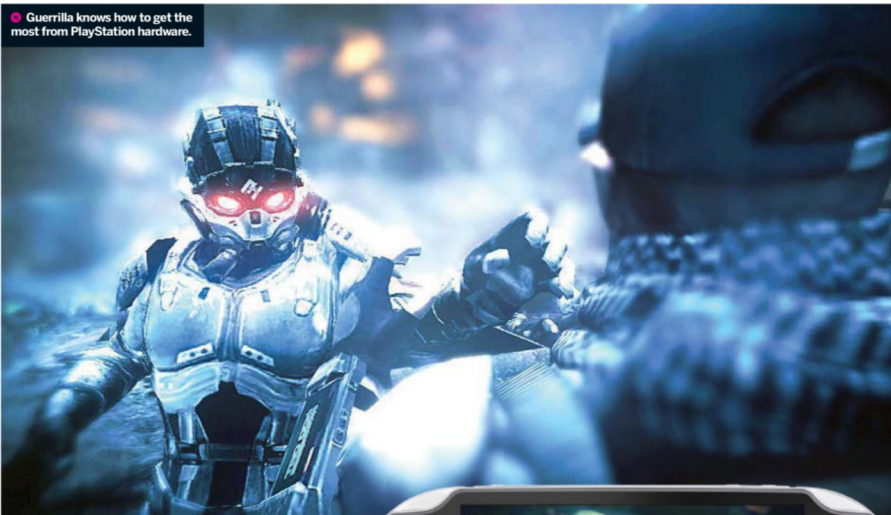
Between *Mercenary* and *Tearaway*, then, it's not as bleak a year for Vita as we'd previously assumed, providing Sony manages to get these titles out the door sooner rather than later, and that there's more to back the machine up come Christmas time. Given Sony's stock of developers, it'd be nice to see more of them assisting the transfer of its biggest franchises to Vita – or, you know, Sony Bend could just make them all. That developer seems to know what it's doing.

Killzone.com is the official place to go for all things *Killzone*. We're definitely going to be keeping an eye on it.

READ ME

Killzone: Mercenary is co-developed between Guerrilla and its Cambridge studio, the latter of which built multiplayer maps for *Killzone 2* and *3*.

Guerrilla knows how to get the most from PlayStation hardware.



PREVIEW



FROM PARIS WITH LOVE

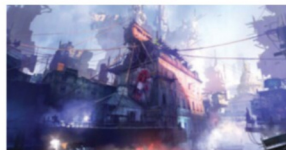
The art of Remember Me



Applying a mixture of pop culture influences to Paris really brings a different side out of the city.



Everything has that retrofitted Blade Runner quality of sci-fi meeting reality.



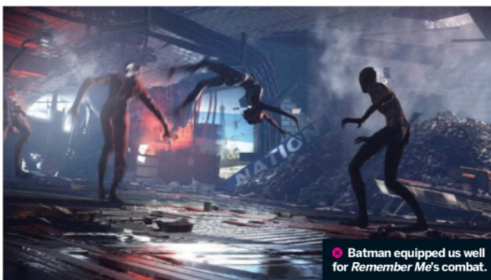
By keeping the game linear, you get to see a tunnel vision snapshot of Paris.



The locations admittedly look better than the characters, striking as they are.



These are your basic throwaway enemies.



Batman equipped us well for Remember Me's combat.



Saturday night in Boumemouth again, then.

AMNESIA!

RELEASE DATE: MAY

Remember Me

Beware the Errorist threat

PS3

When we think of Capcom, we still think of *God Hand*, *Dino Crisis* and *Onimusha*.

Remember Me isn't the type of game you traditionally associate with the Japanese publisher, but maybe that's the point – this is a company that took an enormous risk with the *Devil May Cry* series in handing it to a developer that some believed would screw it all up. It didn't. It turned around one of the best games of the year, even if comment thread specimens didn't want to believe it.

But a new IP from a new developer based on ideas that aren't easily communicated in trailer or press release form is a far riskier move in that direction for Capcom – and while there are signs of roughness in the overall fiction of the world and the way that's delivered to the player, *Remember Me* intriguingly uses *Assassin's Creed* and *Batman*-style typical mechanics as the basis for rather complex storytelling and combat ideas. It's refreshingly hardcore, with an impressively constructed linear interpretation of Paris that offers a beautiful mix of real-life and sci-fi influences.

We start with Episode 0, which annoys us right away (we're just not big on prologues. Elmore Leonard says they're a bad idea, and he knows what he's talking about). This is titled 'Rebirth', and introduces us to Nilin, a young woman trapped in a lab at a company called Memoryeyes who's recently had her memories wiped.

One of the founding ideas of *Remember Me* is the combo lab, essentially a way for players to create their own attack patterns by assigning moves to slots

Sadly for her captors, Nilin still has residual memories of her past life, which must be erased – you get the typical videogame 'interactive narrative' thing where you stagger through a corridor of nasty stuff happening, unable to really do anything but watch.

Nilin manages to escape Memoryeyes, which is when the real game begins (Episode 1!) – guided by a benefactor (i.e. Otacon-type guy but slightly cooler) Edge, Nilin is what's known as an Errorist (lol), one of a group of people who stand against Memoryeyes. This corporation, see, takes people's memories and sells them on, as everyone in the future has brain implants known as 'Sensen', meaning that memories can be deleted, instigated or remixed, which tallies quite nicely with the typical mechanics of progression in a videogame, even if the terminology leaves something to be desired.

Our hands-on starts with Nilin in the slums of Paris, where she's faced with a group of mutants talking nonsense and generally causing a bit of creepy upset (basically like a futuristic version of Boscombe, a town near the **Play** offices that has a polluted cloud of vodka hanging over it). Here, we see

the basics of *Remember Me*'s combat – think *Assassin's Creed* mixed with the clearly superior counter-heavy scrapping of *Arkham City*, an emphasis on keeping yourself moving to avoid hits while timing delivery perfectly.

These Parisian depths feel like a beautiful amalgamation of different fictional influences, from *Judge Dredd* to *Blade Runner* with a little *Mirror's Edge* thrown into the colour scheme, too. There's a retrofitted quality to the environment, a certain basis of reality in the way Paris is presented (Dontnod, the developer, is based there, so it's no surprise to see the architecture of the city replicated beneath the shiny futuristic stuff). *Remember Me* is entirely linear, the idea being that they'd rather you saw a concentrated vision of this fictional backdrop rather than having an open world for the sake of it, and this approach works, offering a huge range of different locations throughout its first couple of hours. There's another slightly less frenetic sequence in an Errorist hideout called the Leaking Brain, a Moe's-style bar that again adds a sense of detail to the context here.

From dilapidated urban slums to the street level, posh bits of Paris, there is a

sense that Dontnod has been carefully considerate in constructing the world of *Remember Me*. Indeed, that's what impresses us most about the game so far – getting around is a slightly rigid affair, in the vein of *Uncharted*'s platforming without feeling quite as light to control, but it functions well enough. Everything is signposted to the point where it's pretty much impossible to get lost – this could do with toning down before the game's release, admittedly, since there could be a satisfaction in having the opportunity to feel like you're exploring this in-depth world properly.

When it comes to combat, on the other hand, Dontnod is happy to let you sink or swim. One of the founding ideas of *Remember Me* is the combo lab, essentially a way for players to create their own attack patterns by assigning moves to slots (a little like *God Hand*, but less malleable – at least in the stages we saw), yet rather than just resulting in different animations, you can use combos to heal Nilin, too.

So, you could line up a four or five hit combo where one move will do lighter damage, but restore some of Nilin's HP on the fly, a handy mid-combat tool that keeps the flow of the battle going, as opposed to *Batman* where that diminishing health bar frightens the shit out of you during round four of the game's harder challenge rooms. We can see how the combo lab could evolve into something quite in-depth as the story progresses, since even in >

“Something to REMEMBER ME by!” Someone has to say it.

PREVIEW



Character designs and voice-acting are holding it back.

There's not a huge action thrust through the story, and you're encouraged to absorb the environmental detail

these early stages there's scope to tailor Nilin's moves to your liking.

Basically, if you've played the Arkham games or *Sleeping Dogs* (an obvious exponent of the *Batman* series), you'll get *Remember Me* right away. It's paced in much the same way as games like that, too – there's not a huge action thrust through the story, and you're encouraged to absorb the environmental detail, which is the correct approach when the world is as well-developed as this.

Characters and story are the main issue with what we've seen of *Remember Me*. The game's bad voice-acting has very much been a talking point of the game so far, and we can see why – it's not convincing and the accents sound all over the place, the latter of which would be fine as a deliberate stylistic touch if the dialogue wasn't delivered with a fist of ham.

Meanwhile, Nilin herself doesn't exactly look memorable. She looks like the protagonist from *Hydrophobia Prophecy* – remember her? No? That's our point. She's not an iconic

character, and traditionally we expect that from Capcom protagonists, so it's disappointing to find that neither the design of the protagonist or the way she's portrayed is even

remotely interesting to us. There's a great world here in artistic terms, but the people that populate it are typical videogame archetypes. We suppose the finished product might turn us around on this, yet we're not convinced.

Then there's another element in *Remember Me* that is almost entirely detached from everything else: memory remixing. These are minigames where Nilin jumps into a person's mind to manipulate their recollection of certain events, in order to alter their personality in the present, which can work to her advantage. These function as point-and-click-style minigames where you experiment with cause and effect to change how a scenario plays out. You fast-forward and rewind through a memory, seeking out interactive variables here and there before activating them to alter the sequence of things going on. We don't want to spoil the actual content of them, however, as we feel that's the most interesting story-based idea the game has, an almost *Heavy Rain*-meets-*Linger In Shadows* venture that stands in isolation.

We find it bizarre that Dontnod is succeeding with so many ideas in *Remember Me* while just cosmetic things are letting it down, like the writing or voice-acting. These aspects, however, are the difference between life and death when it comes to selling a title in the current market. You too may be put off by some of these elements when seeing the game in trailer form, but there's more to *Remember Me* than that, with the combo lab attempting to push that high-end melee combat model forward by letting you play with its fundamentals.

It's not an entirely straightforward experience, which is potentially risky in this genre – and we like that. We live in an age where developers are determined to hold the hands of amateur players with ultra-simplified tutorials, while more experienced players are taught how to move, aim and shoot for the millionth time. Why not release a game where players have to actually learn something in order to make it work? There seems to be a lot of scope to *Remember Me*'s combat, and if this houses as much depth as it claimed to during our hands-on, Capcom could have a cult hit on its hands.

Remember Me is developed by Dontnod Entertainment. Their website is all in French, but you can head there anyway if you like: www.dont-nod.com.



Here, you're about to mess with someone's mind for fun.



We really wouldn't fancy going to a bistro around here.



WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- Fascinating memory remix element, throwing a bit of *Heavy Rain* into the design
- Combat is an extension of *Arkham City*'s ideas, with an option to build combos

- This futuristic vision of Paris is well-realised, if silly at times
- We will fight Errorism in all its forms!

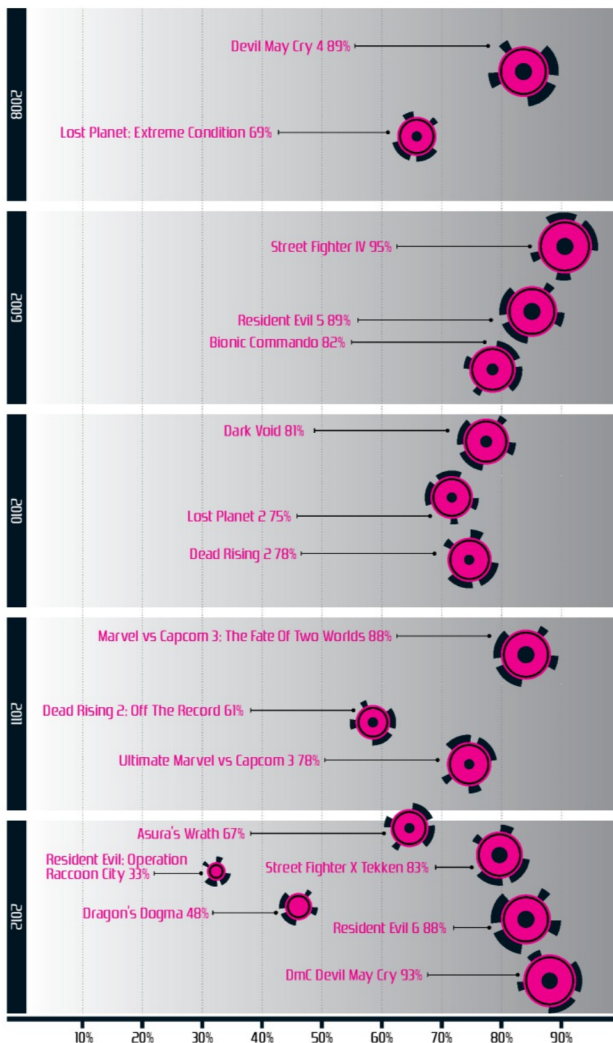
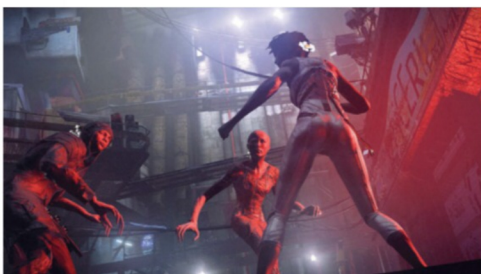
READ ME

Remember Me is a third-person action-adventure set in a *Blade Runner*-style future, with slightly daft terminology that makes us laugh.



CAPCOM ON PS3

How has the Japanese giant fared this generation?





Not Teepo! Nooooo!

RELEASE DATE: 2013



Hey, Jude!



Little buddy? What are you implying?

Tales Of Xillia

Don't be Xilly, read this preview

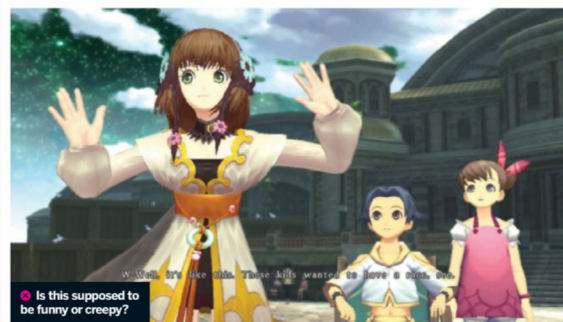
PS3 Think of long-running, wildly-successful JRPG franchises and odds are *Final Fantasy* will come to mind. If you've got some knowledge, perhaps you'll think of *Dragon Quest*. What tends to be forgotten in the west is a third series that completes the trilogy of huge franchises.

The *Tales Of* games have been big business in Japan since the days of the Super Nintendo, yet haven't garnered as much attention here as their Square-Enix developed rivals. Gamecube hit *Tales of Symphonia* was the first to really pick up some steam here, and since then we've seen a steady stream of games delivered to our rainy shores.

Tales Of Xillia is the latest in the franchise to reach Europe, although it came out in Japan two years ago. Better late than never though, eh. *Xillia* follows 15-year-old Jude Mathis, an esteemed medical student attending a

prestigious school in the world of Rieze Maxia, and Milla Maxwell, a mysterious woman with a shrouded past. Players choose one of the two at the start of the game, changing their initial experience. The pair quickly meet up, setting out on a journey to destroy a dangerous device and restore mana to the world. On their travels they meet a number of other characters like cool gunman Alvin (not a chipmunk) and dangerous old codger Rowen.

The thing that sets *Tales* games apart has always been their battle system. Known as the "Linear Motion Battle System", or LIMBS (smart!) These fights tend to be real-time, speedy, and totally manic, a far cry from the considered turn-based battling of many JRPGs. Each *Tales* game has played around with the formula, and *Xillia* features the DR-LIMBS system – the DR stands for Dual Raid.



The basics will be similar to anyone who played last year's *Tales Of Graces f*. Characters can use both regular attacks with X and magical "artes" with O, chaining the two together with a limited number of AC points that regenerate over time. Everything is done in real time, with balancing the rate you use AC points in relation to their speed of recharge the main thing to consider. Players can take control of any party member by setting them as the "leader", but unlike some past games, can't actually change character during battles.

A new "Link" feature allows for two party members to be paired together, attacking simultaneously and performing powerful "Link Artes." Character pairings can be changed on the fly during fights with the D-pad, and from what we've played, the system seems simple to pick up but loaded with

depth for the hardcore fans to master.

For the first time in the main *Tales* series, the game is played from a true third-person, behind-the-back viewpoint, with a fully moveable camera. Past titles used an isometric, top-down fixed camera most of the time. Some of the environment design is breathtakingly lovely, and the new camera massively helps you appreciate them.

Tales Of Xillia earned a great 39/40 score from *Famitsu* in Japan, becoming the highest-rated *Tales* game in the esteemed magazine. It sold loads and got other rave reviews from long-time series fans, so *Tales* aficionados over here can rest easy and get good and excited. Lovely anime cutscenes make

Players can take control of any party member by setting them as the "leader", but unlike some past games, can't actually change character during battles

a return, although a lack of a Japanese voice-over option may annoy the die-hards. Let's hope for the best, shall we?

We don't have a specific date for *Tales Of Xillia* yet, but it's definitely coming this year, and we'd wager sooner rather than later. Lapsed *Final Fantasy* fans looking for a traditional JRPG experience with some modern flare to boot could do far worse than taking a gander.

Tales Of Xillia is being published by Namco Bando. Check the web site for more details: www.uk.namcobandagames.eu/product/tales-of-xillia/playstation-3



QUICK AS A FLASH

Ready, set, fi- wait, it's already over?

BATTLES IN MOST JRPGs are a rather slow affair, taking minutes while everyone takes their turn. *Tales* games are the total opposite, a flurry of manic attacks, bright colours and big explosions, with fights often lasting mere seconds. It can be totally overwhelming to new players, but the game eases you in gently and makes sure you grasp every element before adding more. One nifty feature is a well-timed evade, which will instantly teleport you behind your enemy like something out of *Dragonball Z*. It's pretty rad. It's not brainless by any means, and party member strategies can be set beforehand for maximum efficiency.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- A battle system unlike any other JRPG
- The latest entry in the esteemed *Tales* franchise
- Beautiful environments and character design
- Awsome anime cut-scenes

READ ME

The newest entry in the famous *Tales Of* franchise to hit Western shores, *Tales Of Xillia* promises another epic adventure with unique, blisteringly fast combat.

PREVIEW



RELEASE DATE: Q2

Merked.

Killer Is Dead

Erm, he looks pretty alive to us

PS3

Suda51 is the crazy genius responsible for some of the best cult hits in gaming, including recent favourites *Shadows Of The Damned* and *Lollipop Chainsaw*. Next up from his brain thoughts is *Killer Is Dead*, said to combine the gameplay styles of *No More Heroes* and the utter classic *Killer7* into a gloriously stylish action smorgasbord.

Killer Is Dead stars professional hitman Mondo Zappa as he... no, wait, lets take some time and really think about this. *Killer Is Dead* stars professional hitman Mondo Zappa. If the name alone doesn't make you want to instantly play this game, check your priorities. They are wrong.

Anyway, Mondo Zappa (yes) is a 35-year-old assassin working for the Brian Execution Firm, tasked with executing a series of dangerous criminals. He is aided by his boss, the Bond-girl-esque Vivian Squall, flatmate and assistant Mika Takekawa and chief of the Execution Firm, cigar-smoking cyborg Brian Roses.

Mondo sports not only a spiffy suit, but a sweet katana and a cybernetic left arm. A man of taste and something of a womanizer, when the shit hits the fan he becomes fearless and ruthlessly efficient. In short, the guy is a badass. One of his targets is Victor, a thoroughly

bad guy who steals "musical talent" from musicians in order to play songs full of negative emotions, spreading throughout the world. Yeah. Can we just give this the best game ever award now?

Gameplay looks to be along the lines of other Japanese hardcore-action games such as *Devil May Cry* or *Bayonetta* – frame-perfect controls and long combo strings aplenty, with Mondo's robot arm morphing into a variety of forms to assist in the slaughter, like a gun or a drill. Copious doses of blood and dismemberment are a given, with Mondo making pretty damn sure he gets his job done, and not subtly. Absorbing the blood builds up an "Adrenalin Burst" attack, that when unleashed instantly decapitates nearby enemies. Nasty.

Suda's eccentric touch is easy to see, even in these early stages. In a recent interview with Famitsu he detailed a stage where Mondo, on a motorbike, fights against a yakuza member riding a tiger. The battle takes place in Kyoto, with Suda saying, "I guess we felt like overseas gamers ought to see what Kyoto looks like." If we ever visit Kyoto and it doesn't feature assassins on bikes fighting gang members on tigers, there is going to be disappointment.

Mondo will also be able to flirt with "exotic ladies" in something called

"Gigolo Mode." We don't think this game is going to win any awards for political correctness, but if it's as tongue-in-cheek as *Lollipop Chainsaw* was, we don't mind.

The graphics seem like a next-gen update of the wonderful cel-shaded style of *Killer7* and man do they look pretty. Cel-shading is nothing new in these cynical times, but when done right it can still be breathtakingly good-looking. "We tried going for more realistic visuals at first" says Suda, "but it just didn't produce the sort of unique expression we wanted. So we really pursued an art style that seemed modern with our shading technology. There was a lot of trial and error behind what you see now." The end result is simply beautiful, and these are some of the most striking screenshots we've seen in some time.

The game is apparently about 70 per cent complete, and Suda is hoping for it to release in Japan this summer. A Western release will soon follow, thankfully, as it's already been picked up for Europe. Another quirky masterpiece in the making, then? We hope so. Grasshopper never lets us down.

Killer Is Dead is being developed by Grasshopper Manufacture. Check the web site for more details: www.grasshopper.co.jp/en/index.html.

Just don't get any on the suit!



Heck yes, robot arm.



WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

It looks beautiful.

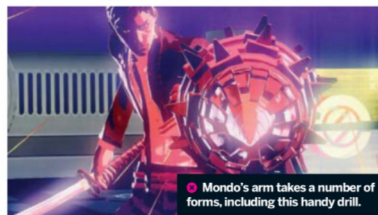
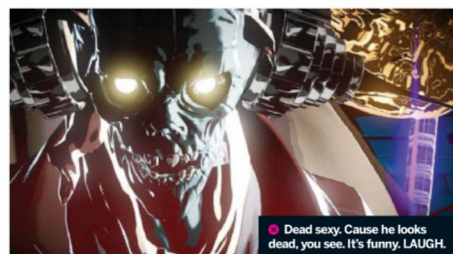
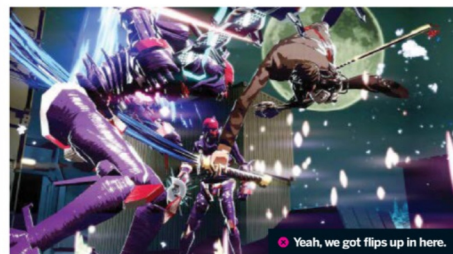
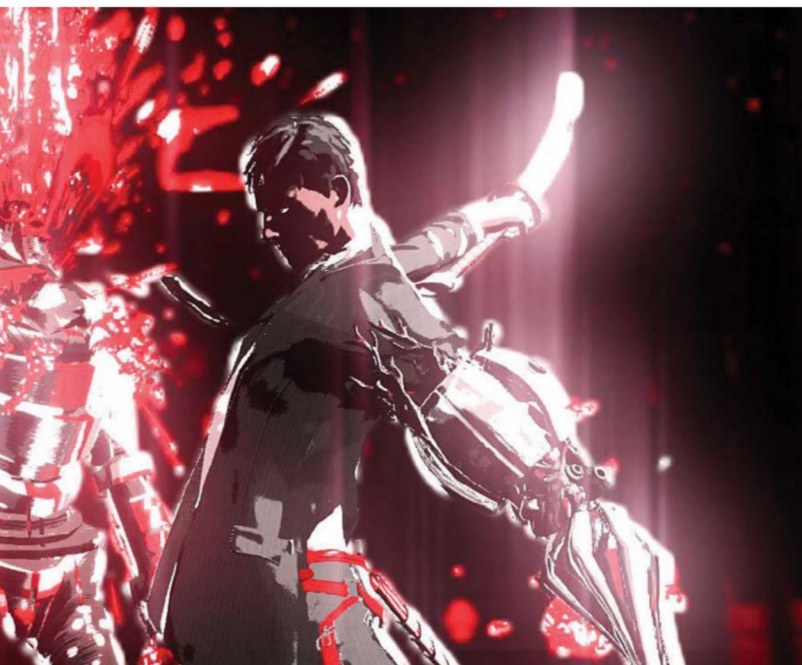
It's made by Suda 51. Aw, yeah.

The action looks fast, furious and frenetic.

THE MAIN CHARACTER'S NAME IS MONDO BLOODY ZAPPA.

READ ME

Mondo Zappa is an assassin tasked with taking out the world's most dangerous criminals, and looking super stylish in the process.



SHINY HAPPY PEOPLE

Can't fault these guys for uniqueness

INCLUDING PROTAGONIST MONDO. *Killer Is Dead* isn't short of crazy characters with great names. We've got his boss, the sexy British catsuited Vivian Squall, who despite being ten years younger than Mondo is still his superior. How about his flatmate Mika Takekawa, who seems stereotypically "Japanese schoolgirl" despite being 20 years old, and apparently cooks a mean half-boiled egg. Our favourite is Brian Roses, the chain-smoking, Hawaiian shirt-wearing cyborg who owns the firm Mondo works for. If you think that lot is odd, just wait til you see some of the bad guys. We'd expect nothing less from Suda51.



RELEASE DATE: 2013

Deadpool

The merc with a mouth gets a game. Expect puns

PS3

Wade Wilson is better known as Deadpool, the uniquely psychotic mercenary and occasional X-Men member who has been a favourite of comics fans for years. With increasing fame and media presence, the time has come for the crazy Weapon-X experiment failure to get his own videogame.

Deadpool is famous for breaking the fourth wall, talking directly to comic readers via his distinctive yellow speech bubbles. His first starring role in a game seems to be no different. The merc with a mouth starts insulting the player before you can even get started, tapping the inside of the options screen and asking if you have any girls "back there." Cheeky bastard.

Even the tutorial is direct. *Deadpool* himself telling you to "press X to jump" and such, in a bored, knowing manner. The guy knows he is in a game, he knows you are controlling him, and he knows you know he knows.

Nolan North, who you may recognise from every other video game ever made, returns to voice

Deadpool after portraying him in other games. From what we've seen so far, the writing is very funny, full of nerdy references that gamers will enjoy. It isn't highbrow, but toilet humour is scientifically proven to be always hilarious.

Gameplay looks to be standard hack and slash affair, with Deadpool's signature katanas and dual pistols making up his standard arsenal, and seem like a pretty damn perfect set for a game. Other weapons are promised, including outlandish stuff like sledgehammers and laser guns. It's gory as all hell, in a tongue-in-cheek manner.

Recently revealed to also be in the game is Deadpool's long time partner/friend/worst enemy, Cable. If the two pair up as well as they have done in their classic comics run, we can't wait. High Moon is responsible for the actually pretty-decent *Transformers* games of the last few years, so *Deadpool* could shape up to be great.

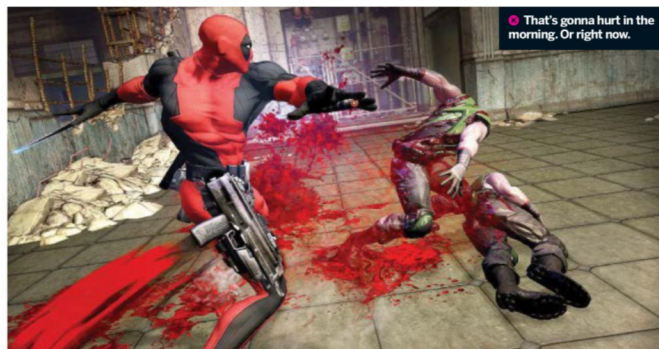
Deadpool is being developed by High Moon Studios. Check the web site for more details: <http://deadpoolgame.com>

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- It's Deadpool! In his own game! Yay!
- Combat seems fun from what we've seen
- Full of potty humour and nerd references
- A whole bunch of other Marvel character cameos

READ ME

An ultra-violent hack-and-slash with the focus firmly set on funny, enter the mind of the most deluded superhero of all time and kick some tail.



DEADPOOL AND FRIENDS

Feature all the characters!

AS WELLAS Deadpool and his best pal Cable, a bunch of other Marvel superheroes are expected to pop up in the game. Wolverine will be appearing, as required by Marvel in everything they ever make, but also expect to see Domino, Death, Psylocke and Mister Sinister, as well as a whole bunch of unannounced surprises. Here's hoping for Taskmaster!

● This is before Jill's hair inexplicably turned blonde in *Resi 5*.

NEW RESI!



RELEASE DATE: 24 MAY 2013

Resident Evil: Revelations

I'm on a boat, and I'm pooing myself

PS3 *Resident Evil: Revelations* was a big hit on 3DS last year, with many heralding it as the best *Resi* game in several years. More emphasis was given to old survival-horror elements over the action-movie theatrics of the last couple of main series releases, with exploration, puzzle-solving and inventory management back in a big way. Which makes us happy to announce that it's coming to PS3! Wahey.

Revelations is set between *Resi 4* and *5*, depicting events shortly after the establishment of the Bioterrorism Security Assessment

Alliance, or BSAA, founded by Chris Redfield and Jill Valentine. You may have heard of them.

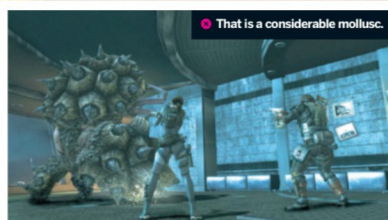
Players control Chris and Jill in separate campaigns, each with their new respective partners. Jill's story takes up most of the running time, occurring on a virus-stricken cruise liner, the SS Queen Zenobia. All manner of nautical nasties have done their usual thing (murder, mostly) and it's up to you to get rid of the lot and discover the conspiracy behind the whole mess. For Jill, this probably amounts to a standard day in the office at this point. Not even fussed, mate.

Chris levels pop up here and there to mix things up and the two campaigns eventually converge into one big crazy story. Seriously, who keeps making all these viruses?

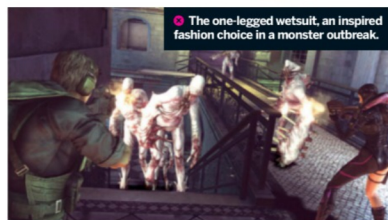
Capcom has promised that the console port will feature improved high definition visuals and exclusive extra content, such as new monsters, extra difficulty levels and additions to the Mercenaries-like "Raid mode."

The only iffy bit of all this is the fact the game is going to have a full retail release, for a full retail price. A bit much for a handheld port, perhaps, but the fact remains that this is a game for all old-school *Resi* fans to get excited for. Hopefully Capcom will pump it full of enough new content to make it worth the dosh.

Resident Evil: Revelations is being developed by Capcom. Check the website for more details: www.residentevil.com/revelations/index.php



● That is a considerable mollusc.



● The one-legged wetsuit, an inspired fashion choice in a monster outbreak.



WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- *Resident Evil* like they used to make it
- Awesome new monster designs
- Chris and Jill are back, again – you know you love them
- Extra content exclusively for the console ports

READ ME

3DS hit and best *Resi* in years, *Revelations* is coming to PS3 with shiny new graphics and a bunch of extra content. Get in.

YOU SNOOZE, YOU OOZE

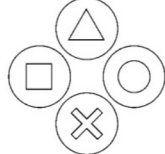
Zombies are so last year

THE MONSTERS OF choice this time around are products of the T-bibyss virus, a marine version of the classic T-virus. 'Cause the game is on a boat this time. Smart. These dudes ain't your standard zombies – "Oozes" can squeeze their bodies through tiny cracks and gaps to get to you, almost like water! We are starting to see a theme here.



BIOSHOCK INFINITE

THE ★ DEFINITIVE ★ VERDICT



WELCOME TO THE MOST AMBITIOUS FPS EVER SEEN ON PLAYSTATION — IRRATIONAL'S EPIC IS SO FAR A RELENTLESSLY GIVING EXPERIENCE, AS WELL AS YEARS AHEAD OF ITS TIME IN NARRATIVE DESIGN. BIOSHOCK INFINITE'S ART DIRECTOR, SCOTT SINCLAIR, TELLS US HOW IRRATIONAL BUILT A WORLD THAT TELLS A TITANIC STORY IN ITSELF...

If it takes two years to make an effects-driven, huge budget Hollywood film, then *BioShock Infinite's* five year-plus development cycle tells you that making an equivalent videogame is a far harder undertaking. When we play the first few hours of Irrational's long-awaited FPS, it becomes clear why that's the case: this clearly exceeds the standard of contemporary shooters in a way that exposes the lack of maturity in games. And we don't just mean that in the sense that every shooter has a story targeted at 12 year-olds or silly levels of violence — most of them do, true — but in the way that it shows off what the PS3 can do with storytelling through environmental design, world-building and writing.

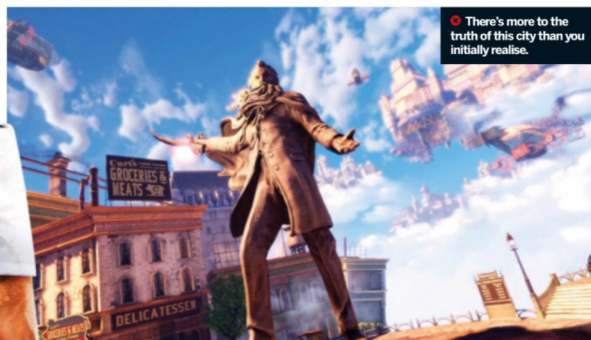
It's a startling piece of work that hits every audience on one level (it's a shooter, after all, and you can throw fireballs at people), but has a layer of substance that'll resonate with a more specific type of player. Crosshairs are drawn on certain elements of American history and the great façade of patriotism, that feel like they're deliberately crafted to make the audience feel uncomfortable. When we first witness *BioShock Infinite* exploring racism, for example, and the way it permeates the sinister culture of breakaway floating country Columbia,

our initial thoughts are that it's a brave subject to touch upon in a game — we get the same feeling when we're walking around a morally dubious museum describing conflicts from America's past, or watching the many in-game propaganda films that relay Columbia's disturbing ideologies.

But this kind of subtext shouldn't be the exception in videogames; it shouldn't be the rule, either, but big triple-A experiences really could be offering us more narrative meat than they are now. *BioShock Infinite* is really refreshing in that regard. It's like the result of years of progress in FPS design that never actually happened — the world of Columbia isn't just a pretty backdrop, it's telling you the story, in an even more heightened way than the intricate design of Rapture did in the previous two games.

"At Irrational, we create within a process for evolution that relies heavily on extreme iteration to answer tough challenges," art director Scott Sinclair explains to us. "A core sample of our levels would reveal equal parts happy accident, narrative direction, historical reference, combat influence, technical constraints, and painful course correction."

Iteration was the key behind Columbia's creation — the themes slotted in naturally around the subject matter as Irrational developed the concept behind *Infinite*. "When you >





Elizabeth helps you in battle. It's not just a long escort mission.

“WITHOUT SPOILING THE DRAMATIC OPENING THAT RECALLS THE ORIGINAL BIOSHOCK, INFINITE INTRODUCES ITS WORLD AS A SHINY HAPPY UTOPIA, WITH PEOPLE PRAISING COLUMBIA'S LEADER FATHER ZACHARY HALE COMSTOCK AND MORNING SUNSHINE DIZZYING YOUR VISION OF BUILDINGS GLIDING ABOVE CLOUDS”

> make games where the environment is a primary character, there are simply too many variables that need careful consideration to produce stories like this,” Sinclair recalls. “When resting on one’s laurels, this process allows you to back up and recognise that you are too comfortable to create at your peak. The only way we know how to zero in on the correct direction is by examining the exquisite corpse of a first idea as we flush it. Stormy night turned into summer sunshine, European Red Light turned into 4th of July Americana, and the narrative conflict started solidifying from American history.”

This process steered *Infinite* out of well-trodden fictional territory and into something a little richer. “This was a drastic departure from the cliché fictional struggle of the religious faction vs. the technology faction that we were building everything in the service of. The 15-year-old in me was bummed for a second, but it quickly became apparent that Ken made the correct calls to elevate our shooter.”

That thematic texture aids the tension within the world’s atmosphere, too. Without spoiling the dramatic, brilliant opening that recalls the original *BioShock*, *Infinite* introduces its world as a shiny happy utopia, with people praising Columbia’s leader Father Zachary Hale Comstock and morning sunshine dizzying your vision

of buildings gliding above clouds. Your character, the Deckard-esque Booker, is after a specific girl, Elizabeth – and his checkered past as a Pinkerton agent is a point of ambiguity that’s delivered to the player through an early flashback.

The world is magnificently realised; we see two environments, a fair with a number of interactive amusements like target ranges, where you’re introduced to the game’s vigors (plasmid equivalents) and a boardwalk that collects shops and other attractions into one scenic locale. There’s far more besides – but revealing them would dive too much into the story, a surprising, twist-heavy tale as anticipated that literally throws you around the city. After Booker is discovered in Columbia and outlined by the authorities as a threat, the pace lurches forward, with players meeting and liberating Elizabeth, before the foundations of Columbia’s devious, false idol-worshipping society starts to come undone.

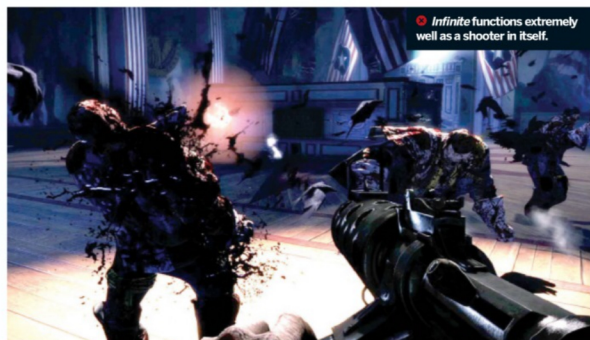
We ask Sinclair what lessons Irrational took away from creating *Rapture* for the original *BioShock* in building Columbia. “The no-spin answer would honestly be very little to nothing at all,” he says. “Everything, including process, was brand new. On a much higher level, the primary lesson learned is that story informs everything we create.”

That’s the advantage of having a story that’s continually moving –



BioShock Infinite isn’t burdened by the same hours of downtime that we see in every other game. There’s no boring underground trudge, endless wall of spawning enemies in dull locations; every moment feels orchestrated, not to add extra time to *Infinite*’s lifespan, but to supplement your experience as a player. It all matters, and it all works. When *BioShock Infinite* is building up to the big action setpieces, you’re treated to fine moments of storytelling and characterisation, revealing more about the world and Elizabeth. The pacing is just continually exciting, and that’s something that feels like the result of having so many years of development, as well as a luxury of Irrational’s immense reputation that few other studios are afforded.

With the vigors in your hands and the skyline rails to traverse, it brings something mechanically new to the FPS, too, and as mentioned last issue, >



Infinite functions extremely well as a shooter in itself.

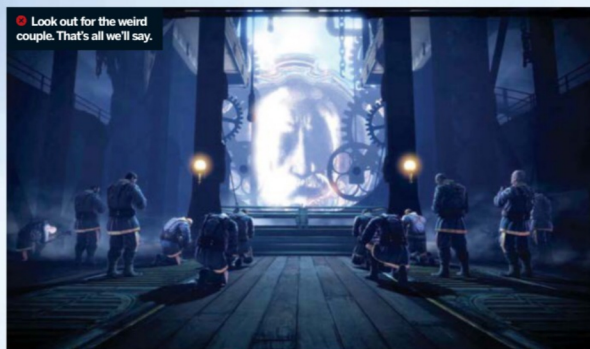


THE INFLUENCE OF BIOSHOCK

WHICH OF OUR FAVOURITE GAMES WERE INSPIRED BY BIOSHOCK? AND WHICH GAMES LED TO ITS CREATION?



Look out for the weird couple. That's all we'll say.



“WE ARE MOSTLY ARTISTS, WITH TRADITIONAL MEDIA ART BACK GROUNDS. I WAS AN EDITORIAL ILLUSTRATOR FOR YEARS BEFORE I THOUGHT IT WOULD BE COOL TO PLAY WITH POLYGONS”

> this is a superior shooter in the way the previous *BioShock* was not. Later on, Elizabeth is able to spawn objects around you using ‘tears’ – wish fulfillment-powered rips in reality that can create cover for you or turrets, as well as some damn memorable gameplay moments that expose you to different parts of time and popular culture. Again, we don’t want to spoil it for you. There are a few characters whose intent is undeniably cloudy, as well as a few choices that hint at multiple strands in the narrative, such is the DNA of the series as we understand it.

BioShock shows the lack of progress in layered narrative from its contemporaries by creating a world that is a living story piece. It’s a crucial part of what Irrational has been working on for so many years. “It is everything,” Sinclair explains. “Without it, the quality of your art amounts to texture resolution and frame rate. We are mostly artists, with traditional media art back grounds. I was an editorial illustrator for years before I thought it would be cool to play with polygons. For better or worse, the quality of everything we create here is judged on an editorial and fine-art level before we allow the engine to dictate anything. It makes for a one hell of a hair-raising optimisation phase, but the end result speaks to you many levels above the classification of ‘videogame.’”

Like any piece of entertainment that wants to hit a wide audience but still deliver something smart and specific, *BioShock Infinite* has relentless detail to draw upon, encompassing themes that you just don’t see in other videogames. While there’s still a huge capacity to muck it up past what we’ve seen, of course – there’s always a strange sense of irony in the parallel between *BioShock*’s idea of creating a perfect city gone wrong, with the idea of developing a ludicrously ambitious game about that subject – but we’ve rarely experienced such a consistently wonderful interactive experience. *BioShock Infinite* is idiosyncratic, a

game that dares to divide audiences in a way that won’t just amount to idiots bickering on Twitter about whether certain guns are overpowered or not. It’s about something. This will likely be a politically contentious work, a devouring interpretation of certain parts of American history and hero-worshipping elements of its culture. And you know what? Some of the very best pieces of fiction are in the ballpark of what *Infinite* is trying to do. Most of them don’t have funfairs floating in the sky or characters that shoot birds and fireballs out of their hands, but hey, you’ll soon find out that’s pretty damn good, too.

“I’m going to Disneyland!” says Sinclair when we ask him to reflect on *Infinite*’s extended development cycle. “There were some hardships along the way – some friends lost to the sea, and we are a very different studio from what we were four years ago. But we are stronger than ever now. I feel lucky that we were able to weather the scheduling nightmares, and that Take-Two believes in us. I’m still a giant ball of stress, but I’m finally able to put the water bucket down because the fire has subsided. I love this team so much right now. I can’t believe we pulled off what we did with what we were up against.”

VERDICT

The most consistent few hours of gameplay we’ve experienced in years, *BioShock Infinite* has a thrilling cycle of impressive setpieces and great storytelling, with a gripping narrative that hints at quite a stunning end product. We’d be rather surprised if this ends up being anything but a masterpiece.

PLUS POINTS

- + Full of secrets, full of surprises – a story that keeps giving
- + A much better shooter than the other *BioShock* games
- + Pop culture references so bizarre they’ll blow your mind

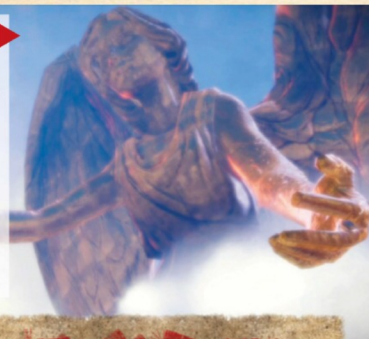
MINUS POINTS

- A lot rests on the story in a game like this – it really will be a challenge to sustain this level of momentum
- But that’s not a criticism, really, it looks awesome
- Character models look a bit rough at times, sometimes lacking detail

CREATING COLUMBIA

HOW THE CITY IN THE SKY WAS BORN

“Our new well of inspiration came from many sources like *Shorpy.com*, *Forgotten NYC*, *Hello Dolly*, the documentary *1912*, *Gangs Of New York*, *Boardwalk Empire*, the 1911 Triangle Factory fire in New York, the *Weather Underground*, and the television show *Fringe* (screw you, haters, I love this show!).”



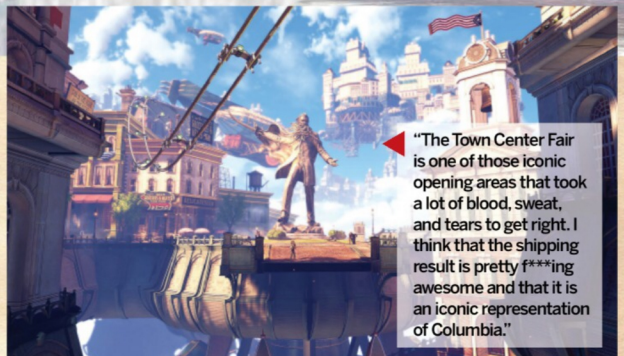
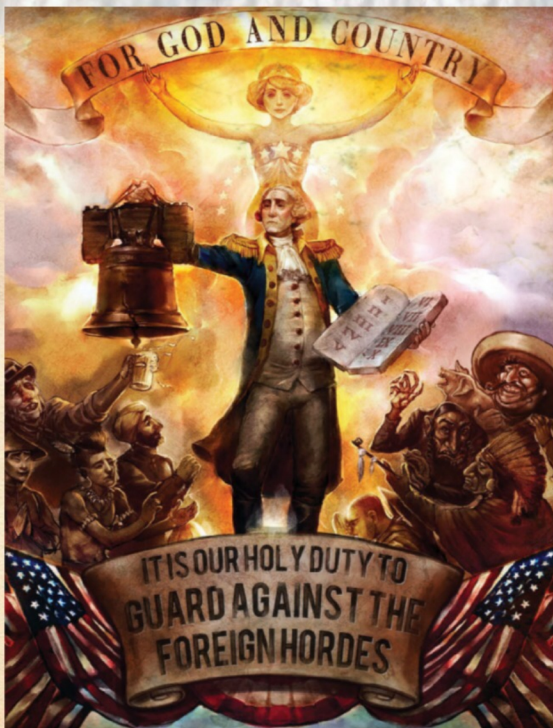
“The thing I am most proud of is the broad range of tones within the city, from beginning to end,” says Sinclair.





"We hired an expert on Art Nouveau, took field trips to historical locations, and brushed out five games' worth of geometry... and then we threw it all away. The one constant in our creative direction, that rings true for everything Columbia today, would be the juxtaposition of the optimism in the world at that time spoiled by the blood of revolution."

"I really wanted to, once and for all, to achieve that feeling I had exploring Azeroth for the first time," says Sinclair, referring to *WOW*'s giant locale. "Those moments where you wander out from Stormwind Castle through lush farmlands, into a haunted forest, and eventually arrive in Stranglethorn Vale. I think we nailed it, or at least got close to achieving this goal with *Infinite*. I really hope that this facet of the game will be something people talk about."



"The Town Center Fair is one of those iconic opening areas that took a lot of blood, sweat, and tears to get right. I think that the shipping result is pretty f***ing awesome and that it is an iconic representation of Columbia."



"Quite a bit of the early inspiration for our setting came from the architecture, pageantry, and optimism on display at the 1900 Exposition Universelle in Paris. The commissioned paintings of Toulouse-Lautrec for the Moulin Rouge, and the atmosphere of the cabaret itself, were extremely present in Columbia's adolescent spirit."



GTA V

COMING 17 SEPTEMBER

Delayed from its original Spring release window to mild rage, let's remind ourselves of why GTA V is a cultural event worth waiting for, no matter how long it takes...

In a piece of rather exciting news, Rockstar posted this on its official NewsWire feed: "Today, we have an official release date to share with you: *Grand Theft Auto V* will arrive in stores on September 17, 2013. We know this is about four months later than originally planned and we know that this short delay will come as a disappointment to many of you, but, trust us, it will be worth the extra time. *GTA V* is a massively ambitious and complex game and it simply needs a little more polish to be of the standard we and, more importantly, you require."

Everyone kicked off immediately about *GTA V*'s delay, of course – this is the age of internet entitlement, after all, where fan moaning can get massive developers to change the endings of its games. But the truth is, we can wait for *GTA V*. Next-gen will categorically not be here in the UK by September, when the game finally arrives, and the torrid reaction of fans is simply due to the level of passion that follows around Rockstar's open

world games. *Grand Theft Auto V* matters to people, and it matters because the sandbox genre is the one with the greatest potential for creative growth. This isn't just the latest release in a huge series – it's a mandate for designing games in the most crucial genre of the next generation. This is the new standard.

With that in mind, *Grand Theft Auto V* is actually one of the most important games of all time. If *GTA IV* set the standard for creating concentrated atmosphere in an open world environment, *GTA V* will take those same principles to an unprecedented scale.

"To all *Grand Theft Auto* fans, please accept our apologies for the delay, and our promise that the entire team here is working very hard to make the game all it can be," the Rockstar newsWire continued. "We are doing all we can to help ensure it will meet if not exceed your expectations come September – we thank you for your support and patience." Conspiracy theories kicked in about whether the game is going to next-gen,

“To all Grand Theft Auto fans, please accept our apologies for the delay, and our promise that the entire team here is working very hard to make the game all it can be”



which Rockstar refuted, and it does seem unlikely given how long *GTA V* has been in development.

What's unique about *Grand Theft Auto* is the dichotomy of its perception by gamers and non-gamers – to the informed, *GTA* is the nexus of mature videogames, a biting satirical but loving assassination of Americana delivered through a living, breathing recreation of American culture. Oh, and you can nick cars just by pressing one button. To the uninformed, *GTA* is the game where you sleep with a prostitute then batter her to death, corrupting the minds of children who aren't legally allowed to play it anyway, and generally destroying the fabric of society, enraging them in a way that stops them from doing more important things, like complaining to BBC's *Points Of View* about a dodgy episode of *The Tweenies*. Oh, and you can nick cars just by pressing one button!

GTA provokes a double-edged, very 21st century polarised reaction that has

something in common with the reception of films like *A Clockwork Orange* from years past, or indeed, any divisive cultural milestone from throughout history. In years to come, *GTA*'s political critics will undoubtedly be regarded in the same vaguely amusing way we view those who campaigned against the release of bloody horror movies in decades past. The general consensus will likely be that Rockstar was creatively ahead of its time once again, and that *GTA V* took America to task on its unending stream of meaningless nonsense, just as its predecessors have done.

As for the game itself, we have submarines, a giant ocean floor to explore, animals galore, the largest map Rockstar has ever produced, countless air vehicles, golf, silly place names, a huge countryside, Vinewood, recession themes to the story, a loads of heist missions, three playable characters, rappelling, parachutes and *Red Dead*-style random missions. And, at the time you read this, only six months to wait.

125
MILLION

Grand Theft Auto series sales, as of November 2012

\$100
MILLION

that GTA IV's production reportedly cost

25+
MILLION

GTA IV sales to date

20+
MILLION

San Andreas sales to date

17.09.13

GTA V release date

1998

The year GTA debuted on PlayStation

1967

Days between GTA IV and GTA V's release

685

The days between the first GTA V trailer and its release date

277

Deceased story characters in every GTA combined



Grand Theft Auto *by the numbers*

92.6%

Average score of GTA games in **Play**

48.4+

Estimated square mileage of GTA V's map, twice as much as San Marino, the world's smallest country

22%

Percentage of Take-Two's total 2012 revenue generated by catalogue games, led by GTA IV

13.9

Estimated square mileage of San Andreas's map

11 Main instalments in the GTA series, including V

8 GTA games you can download on PSN right now

7%

Percentage that Take-Two's shares dropped after GTA V moved to September

4 Combined playthroughs of GTA IV by the **Play** team

3 Playable characters in GTA V

1 Occasions where **Play** crashed a helicopter into Star Junction to kill three players in GTA IV's free roam

18 KILLER FACTS ABOUT DARK SOULS II

TOO EASY? TOO HARD? WORTH QUITTING YOUR JOB JUST TO PLAY? WE ROUND UP EVERYTHING WE KNOW ABOUT DARK SOULS II FOR YOUR READING PLEASURE

BYE BYE, HIDETAKA

1 Hidetaka Miyazaki, director of both *Demon's Souls* and *Dark Souls* and virtual godfather of the series, is not directing *Dark Souls II*. He'll be replaced by two new directors, Tomohiro Shibuya and Yui Tanimura. It's a decision that many fans have expressed their concern with, but one the company has taken to keep the series feeling fresh. Miyazaki isn't being thrown out into the cold though. He'll be carrying out a supervisory role on the project, overlooking and guiding the general direction without getting too involved in the detail. Additionally, Miyazaki is working on a new separate project, details of which are yet to surface.

EXPANDING THE SQUAD

2 According to the new directors, the team working on *Dark Souls II* is a whole lot bigger than it was previously. And although we can't say for sure just how much bigger in total, it is understood that the team focused on world creation alone has more than doubled, and that new staff have been recruited in every area. Let's hope that with new faces come exciting ideas.

SIZE ISN'T EVERYTHING

3 If you were hoping that *Dark Souls II* would be a bigger beast than its predecessor, you might be disappointed. It's about the same size, and the directors have said that you should expect it to take roughly the same time to complete. However, packed into that space will be many more waypoints to visit and a richer, more detailed setting, so it will feel more vast and alive than ever.



CLOSED FOR BUSINESS

4 *Dark Souls II* will not be an open world game, with the map split up into separate areas in the way we're used to. While it's a shame it won't be fully open, it still allows the developers to create very specific types of levels with distinctive tonal choices. No bad thing, we suppose, to adhere to the style players love.

LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION

5 *Dark Souls II* will be set in the same world as the game that spawned it, but don't expect to see the murky environments of Lordain again. This game will take place in a large cove near the ocean in a different part of the world, and the name of this location (yet to be revealed) will be integral to the story. Quite how, we can only speculate.

TIME IS OF THE ESSENCE

6 Whilst some of the details released have been straightforward, much has been kept vague, and the team are clearly conscious of revealing their innermost secrets prematurely. One of the most intriguing tidbits we've got so far is on the subject of time. Whispers from behind the scenes have reached the gaming community's ears, and they're telling us that the concept of time, and its very existence, is something that will be key to *Dark Souls II*. Whether this means you'll be travelling through time to different eras, or manipulating it as a game mechanic, we simply cannot say.

IN YOUR FACE

7 The new directors have already said that they want *Dark Souls II* to be a more direct, more understandable experience than previous games, with a little less nuance and subtlety. This is just their own personality, they say, and they want to convey that to us. This will probably set alarm bells ringing in many heads, given the fact that the *Dark Souls* kept its cryptic cloak wrapped around itself at all times, but don't expect monsters jumping out in pink clown suits just yet. The directors have also said they are focusing on themes such as doubt and loneliness, so it's not going to be a walk in the park.

DYNAMIC STORYLINE

8 The story will once again focus on one character's journey to cure their curse but, despite the subject matter, this is not a continuation of *Dark Souls'* story in any way. The plot will be dynamic, and the exact meandering route it takes will be determined by choices you make, such as whether or not to kill an innocent NPC. Having a story that you can actively affect can only be a good thing, as it's bound to leave you feeling fully involved.

SUPPORTING CAST

10 Along with the as of yet anonymous black rider will come a host of new characters, only a few of which have been revealed: firstly, a mad scientist whose experiments involve creating his own custom and hideous monsters, and secondly, short fellows with big beards who live underground and wield big axes. They're not dwarves though, honest they're not!

NEW GRAPHICS ENGINE

9 The development team has certainly been busy. Alongside creating a new game, it has devised a new engine, perfect for showing off what will no doubt be a stunning setting. They say the reason for the huge graphical update is so it will be taken seriously in the global market, and to do this it has been focusing on new shading and lighting tech. A pretty good fit with the next generation of consoles, you might think.

DROWN YOUR SORROWS

11 Sadness and sorrow are the major themes of *Dark Souls II*, apparently – the developers don't want this to just be a bloodthirsty rampage through the world. The intention is to make your heart ache when you kill certain foes. Perhaps a little bit of inspiration from a certain Team Ico game has been taken here?

CAN'T YOU TAKE A HINT?

12 Given the difficulty of the games in this series, having a selection of hints seems fairly reasonable: you can use them if you want, but if you're a sadistic bastard then you can leave them well alone. *Dark Souls II* will feature both subtle clues to future dangers littered throughout the world and handy hints that can be referred to an unlimited number of times. Because even the most hardcore player needs a helping hand now and again.



EASING YOU IN

13 The theme of making *Dark Souls II* more accessible than its predecessor continues elsewhere: we know that the game's opening sequences will be a lot easier than the brutality we've come to expect from *Souls* games. This could, the directors admit, be something that is jarring for experienced players, but it won't last for long. Think of the opening sequences as simply a warm-up act for the main event. At a certain, unspecified point in the game, the player will experience a moment that will turn the tide against them, throwing them into the meat of the game head on, arms flapping and mouths screaming.

JUDGE, JURY AND EXECUTIONER

14 What good is a morality system without someone to enforce it? *Dark Souls II* will feature, along with such a system, a black rider on a chariot, who roams the land punishing those who have committed evil. The extent to which he/she/it will figure is unknown, but it must surely be linked to the killing of innocents mentioned earlier. This also means that there will be at least one in-game vehicle, but whether there will be any that the player can use remains to be seen.



NO MINI-DLCS

15 You'll be pleased to know that *Dark Souls II* will not feature any of those annoying micro DLC packages that are becoming worryingly popular, and we have the departing director to thank for that. Hidetaka Miyazaki has explicitly said that he has made sure there won't be downloadable weapons or anything of the sort, so if we do get some DLC – and we almost definitely will – expect it to be pretty meaty.

ONLINE DEDICATION

16 *Dark Souls II* will feature dedicated server-based multiplayer, in contrast to the PvP system from previous games, allowing for greater interactivity. Servers allow players to retain their data, making it easier to share with others playing the game. It's something that ex-director Miyazaki has said he wished he had been able to work with previously because of the opportunities it gives the team to evolve the online portion of the game into a truly standout feature.



WEATHER THE STORM

17 To add to the heavy atmosphere, the team is considering playing about with the skies above to create a weather system, and the forecast is oppressive with a chance of heavy snow. Although the new directors say they don't intend to have you running knee high in it, using the weather may be part of the design.



RELEASE DATE: LATE 2013

18 The game is only roughly 25 per cent finished, which means that the release date might be a fair distance away, especially considering that development started way back in September 2011, and it's taken a year and three months to get this far, so expect it to drop at the end of the year.

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REVIEWS

We play games and give them a score

RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Tomb Raider

A far cry from the old Lara



DETAILS

Publisher
Square Enix
Developer
Crystal Dynamics
Price
£49.99
Players
1-8
Genre
Action-adventure
Age Rating
18
Website
www.tombraider.com
Twitter
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Facebook
facebook.com/TombRaider

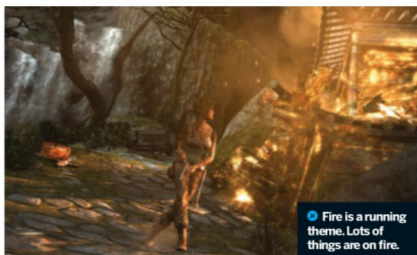


Lara Croft is one of those rare videogame characters that have transgressed the medium to become a cultural icon. Between Lucozade ads, hit films and Nell McAndrew, even our dear old nans have heard of the pioneering Ms. Croft. While the original Lara might have been revolutionary at the time, she now seems archaic and tired – a sexist non-character defined by her physical assets rather than her actions. The time is right for a reboot, reclaiming the good intentions behind the creation of the character.

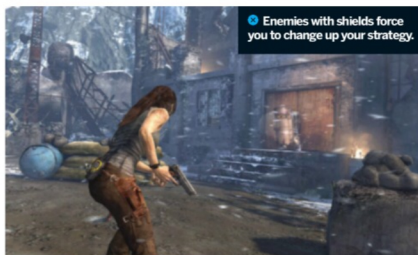
This is a new Lara for a savvy and more inclusive generation. Gone are the enormous breasts, pouty lips and huge dual pistols. Realism, grittiness and simply surviving are the themes here, creating the first truly mature entry in the *Tomb Raider* franchise.

Our new Lara is a 21-year old university graduate, assisting in the filming of a famous TV archaeologist's show as he sails round the world. Searching for the mythical country of Yamatai, the ship runs into a horrendous storm, and Lara and co. are washed up on a desolate island. Lara is split up from her friends and learns the hard way that the island is home to a bunch of psychopathic, stranded pirates. Wham bam, you've got yourself a game premise.

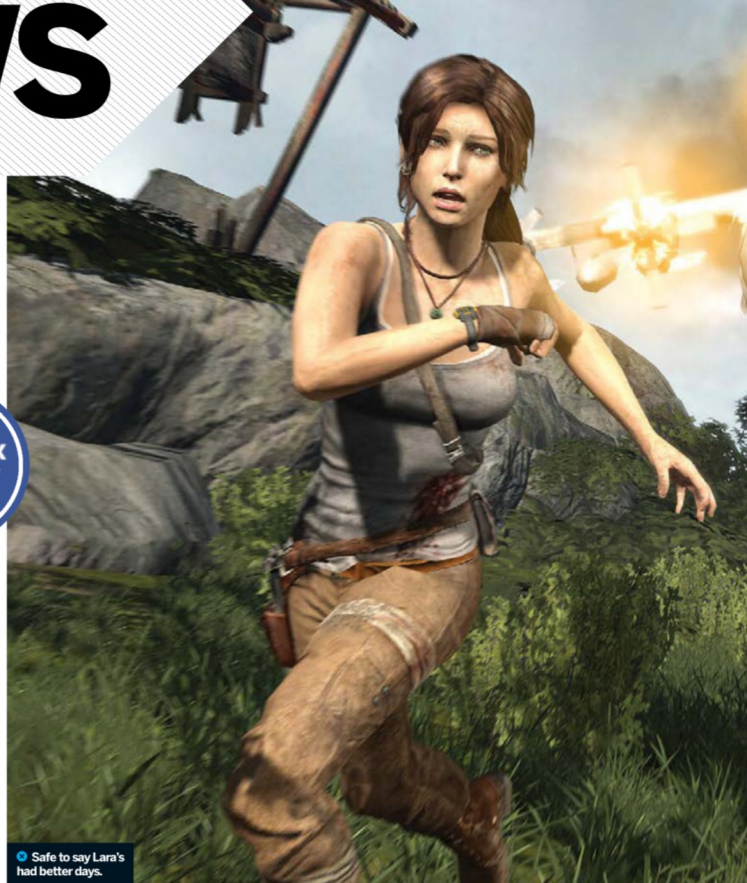
It's striking right from the start how stark and real *Tomb Raider* feels. Lara is not an all-powerful superwoman. She is scared, upset and obviously extremely distressed by the situation – the reaction of a real person.



Fire is a running theme. Lots of things are on fire.



Enemies with shields force you to change up your strategy.



Safe to say Lara's had better days.

The opening hours of the game can seem at times like they exist for no reason but to torture Lara Croft in various ways. The first five minutes have her falling onto a metal rod, impaling her through the torso, the player having to mash a button to pull it out. It's extremely powerful, and difficult to watch, reminiscent of the famous finger-cutting scene in *Heavy Rain*. This is a world where violence isn't shrugged off and forgotten about – it's real, it hurts, and it's horrific. Lara's default pose for several hours afterwards is her clutching at her wounded side, wincing in pain.

Lara's initial struggles do a great deal to endear her to the player. As she finally creates a bonfire to settle down for the night after escaping immediate danger, you realise that you already, after a mere ten minutes, care far more about this Lara than you ever did

It's striking right from the start how stark and real *Tomb Raider* feels

for previous, less realistic iterations. She seems far more like a real person than a caricature, and it's testament to Crystal Dynamics' storytelling that you want her to succeed and overcome the horrible situation she finds herself in.

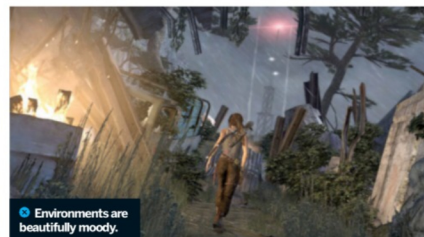
The opening hour is the most muted and perhaps the best. Lara is totally alone, wounded and hungry, hunting deer with a makeshift bow for something to eat. It's a great way to get to grips with the core game mechanics, and learn the intricacies of the bow, which is going to be your best friend in the struggles to come. Lara is an athletic lass and can jump, climb and run with the best of them, despite her hastily-treated injuries. A key mechanic is her "survival instinct." A quick tap of L2 drains all colour from the screen briefly as points of interest and objective markers are highlighted. It's a neat trick that leaves the screen uncluttered from markers and such until you need a quick reminder of where to go.

Make good use of both instincts and bow and Lara bags a deer for some tasty eating. Not even this goes smoothly in the "real world" of this new *Tomb Raider*. The deer lies there, in pain, slowly dying, almost a parallel to the

Or you could try



Uncharted 2: Among Thieves Issue 185
You know it, you love it. Similar to this, but happier.
96%



situation Lara finds herself in. She apologises to the deer and shakily finishes it off. It's another great example both of how young and innocent this Lara is, and how different she is from her former self. The old Ms. Croft gunned down all manner of endangered species with nary a backward glance.

Shit is soon hitting fans again though and Lara finds herself creeping through an enemy camp, searching for her friends. This is where the infamous "rape scene" occurs, the subject of much controversy in the press before the game's release. In reality there is nothing to warrant the attention – a bad guy grabs Lara and holds her in a threatening and intimidating way, telling her how she's about to die – that's it. It's unpleasant and disturbing, as it should be, but nothing specifically implies rape or the attempt of it.

A fight with her captor follows and one gunshot later, Lara has taken her first human life. This scene is extremely brutal, to excellent effect. The man lies on the ground, spluttering and choking with half his face missing as he dies. It manages to be far more graphic than your standard "exploding headshot" videogame trope, hammering home the realism of it all. Lara has killed someone, and even in self-defence, that is a terrible thing. Reflecting on it later, when asked if it was hard, Lara reflects that what is scary is "how easy it was." It only gets easier. >



BOWS ARE BACK, BABY

Arrow to the knee? More like face!

Between Hawkeye in *The Avengers*, Arrow on TV and *Far Cry 3* (and loads of others), bows have become cool again, and *Tomb Raider* is set to continue the trend. The weapon becomes Lara's best friend, the perfect blend of stealth and power tearing bad guys a new one. Taking out evil dudes silently from afar, popping off headshots while their friends aren't looking, is awesome fun made all the better by the wonderful handling.

A crappy wooden bow will be the first weapon you find, but it proves more than sufficient for hunting both animal and human prey. Further upgrades see Lara switching for a metal recurve bow, and eventually settling on the gigantic, *Transformers*-esque competition bow. This monstrosity of taut steel and carbon fiber is a beast, taking down enemies left and right with total precision and brutal power.

Lara also finds some upgrades to her arrows, eventually unlocking both fire-spreading napalm arrows and explosive, grenade-tipped ones. If shooting an arrow into someone's face isn't deadly enough, why not set them on fire too? Using flames to flush opponents out of cover is a great tactic that makes it easier to pick them off. You could play the whole game with nothing but the bow and still have a great time.





OUR LARA, HOW SHE'S CHANGED

Ms. Croft is a woman of many talents...

SURVIVAL INSTINCT

Lara's "survival instinct" is a great help in navigating the island. Points of interest and objective markers are highlighted while the rest of the screen fades out, all at the touch of a button. Wish we had instincts like that.



ZIPLINE

Smart use of her climbing tool as a makeshift zipline lets Lara traverse big distances in no time at all. It's another slight similarity *Tomb Raider* has with *Far Cry 3*, but rest assured, the games are very different.



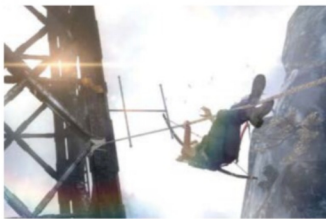
MELEE KILL

Lara is a quick learner, and circumstances demand her to become a force to be reckoned with. Some up-close finishing moves are brutal, from arrows through the neck to a machine gun blast to the stomach. Don't make her angry!



CLIMBING

Lara must enjoy rock climbing in her spare time, cause she's a real dab hand at the whole business. Scaling perilous cliff faces and frayed rope bridges are all a day on the job for our heroine, and controlling her is always easy and enjoyable throughout.



> From here, the game starts to throw human enemies at you, albeit slowly at first. Past *Tomb Raider* games have been puzzle-heavy, 3D platformers with crap combat thrown in. This one is very much the opposite – gunplay is the order of the day, with a healthy dose of platforming to break it up and only the odd head-scratching puzzle. When it comes to comparative gameplay, the title that comes to mind is *Uncharted*. *Tomb Raider* offers a similar blend of action, platforming and theatrical set-pieces, albeit with a much darker tone.

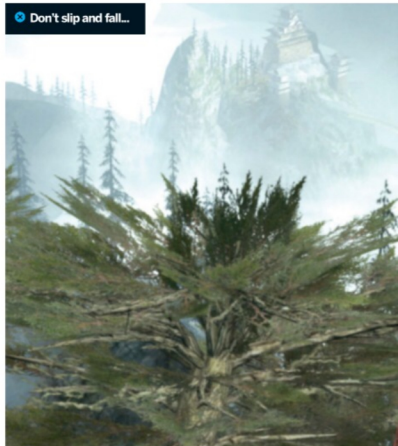
We say gunplay, but the weapon you will be obviously spending the most time with is the classic bow and arrow. Allowing for stealthy kills and precise headshots, picking bad guys off with the bow is a thrill. Along with *Far Cry 3*, *Tomb Raider* is set to prove that bows are back in a big way. Can we have a Hawkeye game, please?

Lara only finds three other weapons in her journey – a pistol, a shotgun and an old machine gun (four if you count her ice-pick climbing tool). Four weapons may not sound like a lot, but each serves a distinct purpose and it fits with the realistic feel of the game to not overload Lara with weaponry.

Players collect scrap metal and other resources from a variety of sources through the environment, from crates and supply stashes or looted from dead foes. These resources go towards upgrading your weapons, increasing damage and accuracy, all standard stuff. Lara also finds key weapon parts that, once collected, actually transform the weapon into a shiner new model.

The bow, for example, transforms from a basic wooden affair into a more powerful recurve bow, eventually becoming the enormous competition bow. The machine gun goes from a WWII-era relic to a modern assault rifle. It's a smart system. Upgrading your weapons into new versions feels like obtaining a whole new gun, when in reality your arsenal never expands beyond the original four. It's not realistic but hey, videogame logic. Even in a

Don't slip and fall...



game that prides itself on that real-life feeling, there has to be a bit of suspension of disbelief.

One key part of Lara's moveset that is extremely useful during combat is the scramble, accessed with a quick tap of O.

The island is stunning in its bleakness, with a hostile sense of beauty

In any other game this would have been a roll, but here Lara quickly dashes across the ground on all fours, almost animalistic, in an attempt to get out of danger and avoid gunfire. It's wonderful, managing to encapsulate everything that makes *Tomb Raider* stand out as a unique title. It just feels legitimate – this is the movement a real person would make, if forced into this horrific situation. To be fair, a second tap of O during the scramble will result in a roll, but again, it's still a videogame at the end of the day.

Lara is simply a joy to control, her fluid movement and sprightly frame a world



"YOUR FLY'S
UNDONE." "WHAT?"



away from the weighty control of many other third-person games. Leaping across large gaps evokes the same visceral thrill of the early games, scaling cliffs is a breeze, scrambling between cover is useful and fun and aiming is responsive. One genius touch is that there is no crouch button. When Lara enters combat, she automatically assumes a crouching stance, keeping low to the ground at all times but still moving at the same speed. It's that touch of realism that works so well it's amazing no one else has thought of it before. If you were in a gunfight, damn straight you'd keep your head down the whole while.

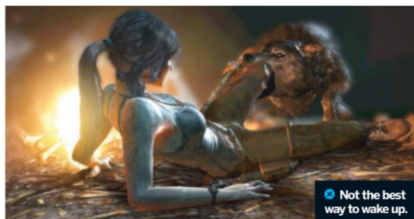
Experience points are earned both with kills and from finding them throughout the world, used to upgrade Lara's skillset. A good example of this is Lara's melee attack. Initially this is a mere shove, ineffectual against the larger, stronger enemies she fights, aside from the odd plunge off a cliff. This becomes a more useful swinging attack with her ice pick climbing tool, players eventually unlocking a quick kill move after a successful dodge, with brutal results – impaling a guy through >



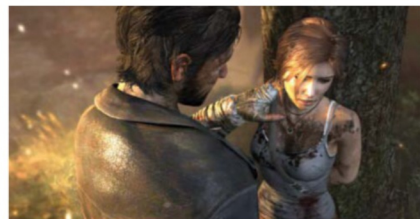
We could totes
make that jump.



The bow can take
out foes silently, if
used carefully.



Not the best
way to wake up.





> the neck with an arrow but one of many. It's yet another great example of how the game design complements the story – Lara is growing as an individual, learning to fight and survive, and the increase in abilities available to the player reflects this.

For the majority of the game, *Tomb Raider* maintains the dark, gritty tone of a girl out of her depth, surviving by the skin of her teeth. Most battles end with the player victorious, but feeling like it was a hard-fought, barely-attained win. It's just the right balance, always difficult but not unfairly so. Frequent enemy use of Molotov cocktails forces you to stay on the move, never sticking behind one piece of cover for too long.

The story goes to some very dark places, with Lara being put through the proverbial wringer a fair few times as she grows from victim to hunter. Just when you think nothing worse can happen to this poor girl, something does. Mounds of corpses, rivers of blood, even more nasty injuries – this is a bad week in the

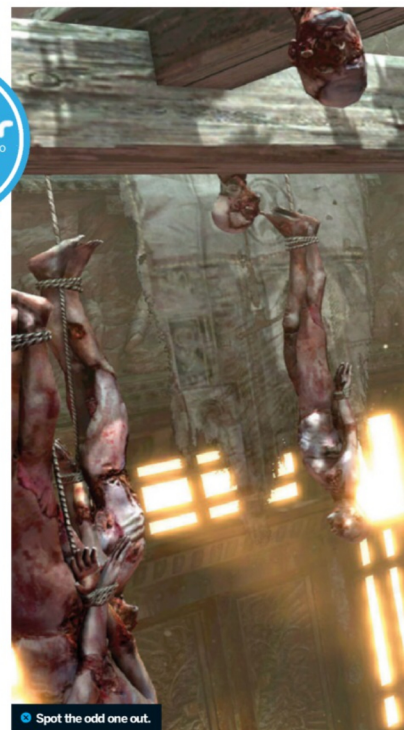
life of lady Croft. It even feels more like a horror game at times.

Some of Lara's deaths can occasionally seem a bit torture-porn, especially those that come as the result of a failed quick-time event. Metal rods through the jaw, skewered on tree branches, battered into rocks by strong underwater currents, it's brutal stuff. Sometimes it's a little over the top, but still tends to feel fitting with the bleak setting.

Unfortunately, the game tapers off slightly towards the end. The considered pace and dark, realistic feel of the story give way to huge shootouts and massive action-movie set-pieces, Lara screaming at her aggressors as she turns the tables and becomes a one-woman army. It does feel like vengeance of a sort, annihilating the enemies that have tortured you previously, but it lacks the same emotional attachment the game has done such a good job conjuring up to this point.

The story itself also veers away from realism, taking some absurd turns into something more akin to the classic games. It makes sense, we suppose – after all, this is a reboot of those same games – but it's a shame to see a mostly mature story turn into something that's frankly, a bit daft. Still, it's nowhere near enough to spoil all the great stuff that comes before, and even when it's being silly, *Tomb Raider* is still miles more involving and entertaining than most other blockbuster-style games.

Graphically, *Tomb Raider* is one of the best looking games we've seen, making great use of the extended hardware cycle to wring every last piece of power out of the machine. The island is stunning in its bleakness, with a hostile sense of beauty pervading the craggy



Spot the odd one out.

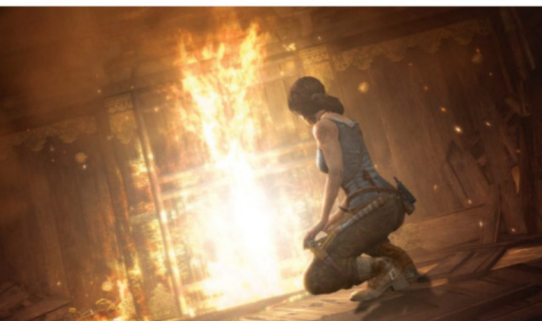
cliffs, shipwreck-filled beaches and ruined ancient villages. It's a world away from the sunny paradise of *Far Cry 3*, despite both being set in similar geographical locations.

Lara is the star of the show, and it's her character model which is the most impressive. Not only does she look like a real person, she moves like one, with little mannerisms and facial expressions to further personalise her. Noticing the small things, like her arms shaking with muscle strain as she opens large chests, makes all the difference.

Gamers can expect to get a solid ten hours out of the main story, with a bunch of extra stuff to take up more time if they so choose. Chief among this extra guff are seven optional tombs to explore, the only time in *Tomb Raider* where you actually do so. These tombs are practically the only places in the game with puzzles, but all seven are extremely short. One puzzle apiece leads to a crappy reward of some resources and a map, each time. It's disappointing, especially if you remember some of the rock hard brain-teasers from the original PlayStation days. With only seven of them, the extra tombs barely add another hour of game time.

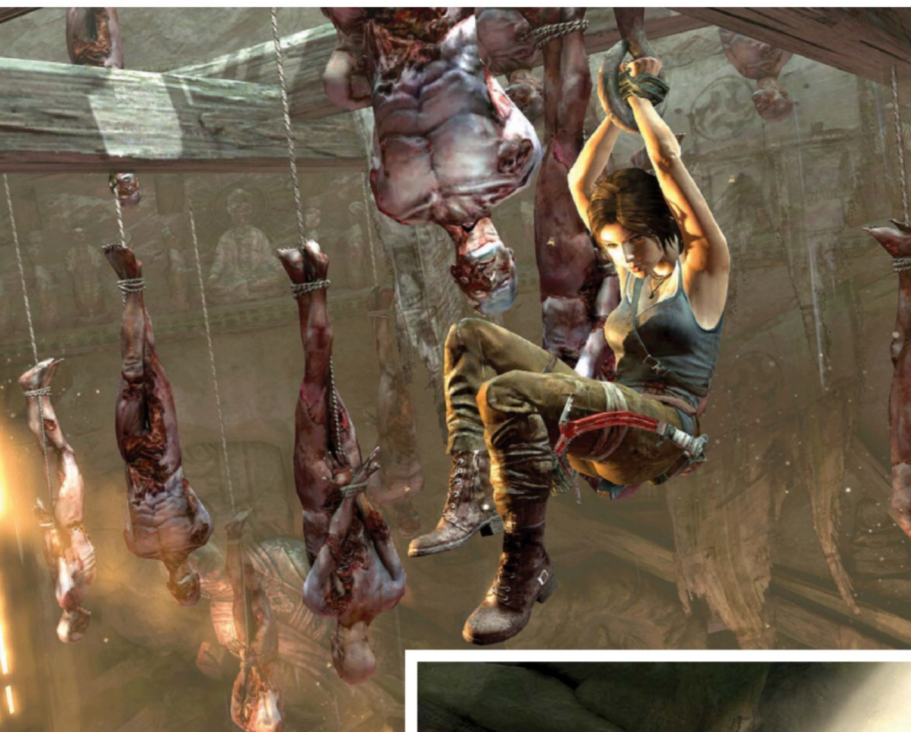
Dotted around the island are relics to discover, Lara offering a bit of information on each with some requiring additional examination to uncover all their secrets. It's a nice way of adding some background detail to the island as well as portraying Lara's love of archeology through gameplay.

Otherwise, it's the standard open-world bunch of extras to find, ramped up to an extreme level. There is a LOT of random crap to pick up in *Tomb Raider*, all of it



You'll be alone most of the time, but not always.

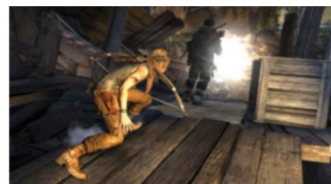




ONLINE MODE RATED

Or, it would have been

Tomb Raider is the first game in the franchise to offer multiplayer, with two teams of four battling it out online in a variety of game types. We would like to have tried it, but unfortunately, technical issues beyond our control led to us being unable to sample it. From what we've seen, the online looks like rather standard multiplayer shooter fare with some set piece-driven features – similar to *Uncharted*, and that turned out quite well. Regardless, it shouldn't be a huge factor in your decision – this is a fantastic game in single player alone.



meaningless aside from upping a completion percentage and getting some trophies. It's a bad, transparent way of artificially adding replay value. The island is essentially an open world, but feels more like several large stages connected by corridors. Lara can fast-travel around from select bonfires, facilitating easy travel. Traversing the landscape is always a pleasure, but without any real reason to do so following the end of the story, there isn't a huge amount of extra value here.

It's lucky then that the initial *Tomb Raider* experience is so excellent you'll more than likely just replay the whole story again instead. As a reboot it's a huge success, stripping away all the crap from the old Lara and making her modern and relevant once more. As a game it's a blast, with fluid platforming and responsive shooting. As an experience it's mature and interesting, dark and gritty while rarely being exploitative. You will care about this Lara Croft and what is going to happen to her.

It falls off slightly towards the end, but a few other minor quibbles aside, *Tomb Raider* is still a triumph that is more than worth your time and money. Welcome back, Lara. We missed you.

Sam Smith

VERDICT

Mature, thought-provoking and great fun, *Tomb Raider* is an outstanding introduction to the new Lara Croft. It plays well, it looks wonderful – there is very little here that is hard to recommend.

Hopefully this rich interpretation will direct the franchise's future.

90%



• Yep, there are still some tombs.



• The relentless hunting of Lara sometimes feels like a horror game.

RELEASE DATE: 15 MARCH

God of War: Ascension

The best-looking game on PS3



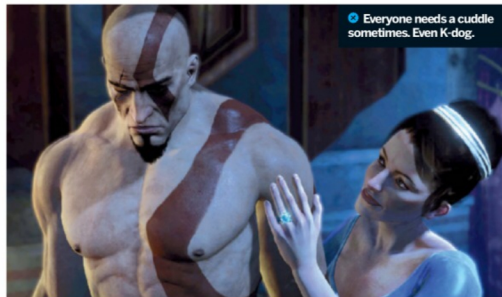
DETAILS

Publisher
Sony
Developer
Sony Santa Monica
Price
£39.99
Players
1-8
Genre
Action
Age Rating
18
Website
www.godofwar.com
Twitter
[@sonysantamonica](https://twitter.com/sonysantamonica)
Facebook
www.facebook.com/godofwar

PS3 Yesterday (at the time of writing), the PlayStation 4 was announced in a lavish event in New York. You'll have read about it earlier in this issue; it's a very exciting time. It's also now a very tough time for the remaining PS3 games, as they have to shout to be heard above all that next-gen noise. It's a similar problem that *God Of War 2* suffered from, in fact, as it arrived very late in the PS2's active life when the world looked to the PS3 for its gaming salvation.

There's something utterly primal about tearing a mythical creature's head off

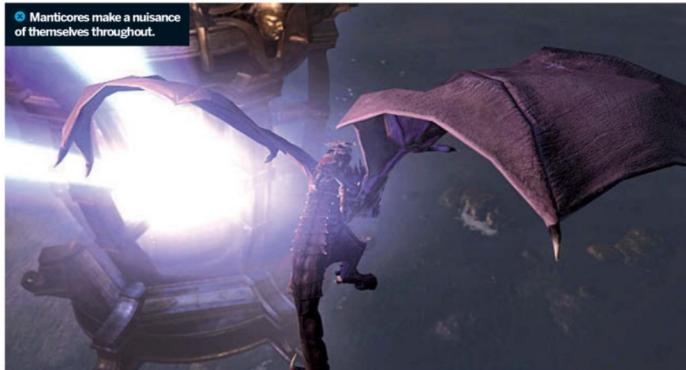
So how did *God Of War 2* solve this problem? By smashing it to pieces, repeatedly, tearing off its head, pulling its eyes out then shouting back down its now-open neck hole loudly enough that the sound waves caused its body to rip open and disappear into tiny bloody embers. And how does *God Of War: Ascension* approach the issue? Well, pretty much the same way, but with one added point – the bloody thing actually looks like a PS4 game already.



Everyone needs a cuddle sometimes. Even K-dog.



Manticore makes a nuisance of themselves throughout.



Now, that's not to say *God Of War: Ascension* has somehow transcended the PS3's architecture and achieves levels of detail and definition that we saw in the likes of *Killzone: Shadow Fall* or *Deep Down*, but there was nothing shown at that press conference that is as artistically staggering as huge swathes of *Ascension*'s meaty and violent campaign. The opening scenes are almost a joke, an insult to other developers – it's no exaggeration to say that Kratos

battles his enemies while in the moving hand of a 300-foot-statue-come-to-life, which itself

is being torn apart from within by an even bigger monster. It's phenomenal. Truly.

Now, the series has always been known for this sort of spectacle, and with *God Of War III*, the marvellous team at Sony Santa Monica could even be accused of focusing too much on the majestic to the detriment of that game's pace, plot and even its combat. *Ascension*, though, feels like an immediate answer to that game's critics. Not only is it a masterclass in pace and forward movement, it's also a fundamental reworking of the core combat system that has underpinned the series since its inception. For the fourth (sixth, including portable) game in a series, *God Of War: Ascension* is nothing if not brave.

In fact, it's the changes to the combat that prove *Ascension*'s most (potentially) divisive choice. To most, nothing will look different – Kratos still swings chained blades around like a furious maniac, mythical creatures get sliced up, there's lots of shouting... but look a little further, and you'll see key tweaks to how the game is actually played. Parrying – an integral part of the series' action – has been altered, now requiring a secondary button



press, rather than just hitting the block button at the exact right time.

It's now much harder to time a successful parry, as you can't simply spam the input hoping you'll deflect a strike. Mistime your parry (a little golden shield pops up in front of our boy when you attempt one) and you'll suffer a small delay before you can get moving again, meaning you're wide open for some Gorgon or goat man to uppercot you in the throat. It's a much higher risk than before, and with no greater reward. At first, this felt like a crucial and ghastly alteration, making the always-underrated combat feel stagnant and monotonous.

A few more hours in, though, and it all starts to make sense – the game needed to change. If *Ascension* had maintained the series' battle-tested systems, it could easily



That's one hot hammer.



Kratos begins the game in chains, tied up by the Sisters of Fury. Unsurprisingly, he escapes.

have conjured up the sort of apathy that high-numbered sequels so often promote. As it is, though, you now genuinely have to relearn the game, and there's a sensation of improvement and mastery that didn't feature in *God Of War III*.

This is amplified by the new elemental powers that you pick up very early on in the campaign. At first, having access to fire, ice, lightning and, for some reason, death (someone got confused in a meeting, we assume) is baffling, and you'll likely stick to the one that happens to be equipped at the time. As you progress, though, the specific elemental attacks that each one imbues to your blades starts to make each encounter feel more like an experiment. A very violent experiment, admittedly, but it's definitely still science. We're pretty sure about that.

And Kratos has reason to be violent. Unlike *God Of War III*'s somewhat sappy third act, this is the vengeful Kratos that we know and love. The action takes place before the events of the first *God Of War* (and if you don't know what happened, just check out our handy boxout), and Kratos has made up his mind that he hates Ares and is ready to start getting even more angry than he was already.

Unfortunately for him, the Sisters of Fury don't like it when mortals break their blood oaths to the Gods, so they decide to harsh Kratos' vibe by making him constantly hallucinate awful things, battle through incredible hardships, and generally do just about enough to justify a whole new videogame. Battles with the Sisters are memorable and often stunning, but it's the stuff inbetween that is the most impressive. >



STICKS AND STONES

Pick stuff up. Hit fools with it

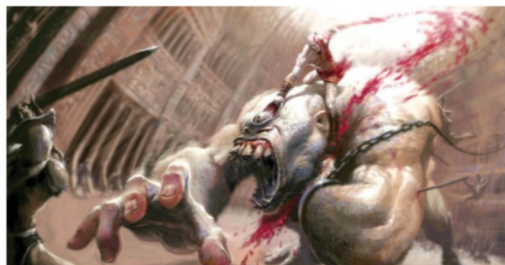
INSTEAD OF THE traditional *God Of War* weapon collection, *Ascension* leaves you with the Blades Of Chaos (complete with four elemental flavours) and lets you pick up secondary weapons from the battlefield. You might find a sword for hacking, a javelin for chucking, or a sling shot for... slinging. A personal favourite is the giant mace/club thing, which can bat smaller enemies for six, and the shield, which can be used to bash foes into a stun state, fresh for some savagery. It's a change that feels like a service to multiplayer, but it makes each combat encounter full of variables and options.

Or you
could try



DmC Devil May Cry Issue 227
A fantastic reboot featuring world class combat
and bursting with imagination. 93%

REVIEW



THE STORY SO FAR

Catching up with Kratos. Spoilers, obviously

GOD OF WAR

Ever wonder why Kratos is so angry? Well he has good reason. Once a brutal and successful Spartan captain, Kratos eventually fell in battle, but just before he was about to be slaughtered by a Barbarian, he offered his life to Ares – the god of war, in exchange for the death of his enemies. Ares took Kratos' offer, but in order to cement his loyalty, Ares tricked Kratos into murdering his own family. His white pigmentation is actually the ashes of his dead family permanently molded to his skin by the Oracle.

The goddess Athena tells Kratos – who tires of serving the gods – that if he can kill Ares, he will be forgiven for his sins. In order to do so, he must locate Pandora's Box, open it to unleash the power of the gods, and take out Ares to become the new god of war.

GOD OF WAR II

Kratos is now the god of war, but is still haunted by the actions of his past. He becomes increasingly destructive, and commands a Spartan army to destroy the city of Rhodes. During the battle, an eagle swoops down and saps Kratos of his godly powers, and animates the Colossus of Rhodes. Kratos battles the giant statue, and the fight ends in stalemate, until the eagle is revealed to be Zeus. Zeus then offers Kratos the chance to kill the Colossus by infusing the rest of his powers into a blade, but the plan was a ruse, and Zeus casts Kratos to the underworld.

It is here he meets Titan Gaia, the mother earth, and sets about reclaiming his spot on Mount Olympus by mobilising the rest of the titans to mount an assault on the gods. The game ends with Kratos climbing Mount Olympus on the back of a Titan.

GOD OF WAR III

The third Kratos adventure begins exactly where the second finished, with Kratos ascending Olympus on Gaia's back. Immediately, he battles the god Poseidon in a truly majestic graphical showcase, but Zeus manages to conquer the Titan uprising, and Kratos is once again sent to the underworld. There, he meets Athena, who instructs Kratos that the only way he can defeat Zeus is to extinguish the Flames Of Olympus.

With Kratos being Kratos, he does this in the most hilarious way possible, first by killing the god of the underworld, Hades, and then taking out the Titan Perseus and the sun god Helios. Eventually, he makes it back up to the top of Olympus and battles Zeus, defeats him, but loses his life doing so. Or does he...?



• The art direction is absolutely magnificent.

➤ Yes, *God Of War: Ascension* does scale and spectacle better than anything, but this time it fills the gaps with constantly interesting stuff to see and do. And kill. The pace is much more like *God Of War 2's* – barely five minutes passes without a memorable scrap, a sumptuous vista or a crafty puzzle. It might have the reputation for being a brainless brawler, but in many ways *God Of War* is Sony's *Zelda* – an amazing world, brilliant characters, and in the case of *Ascension* specifically, truly clever puzzling.

Kratos picks up a few powers along the way, and they're rapidly introduced to the puzzles. There's some seriously smart stuff in here. Not only can Kratos use an amulet to change the life-or-death state of huge objects in the world (rebuilding a long-destroyed bridge, for example, or reanimating a corpse), he can also make a duplicate of himself. And that guy is really good at standing on touch plates or keeping hold of levers.

The puzzles eventually incorporate all of these elements, along with weighty, multi-faceted spatial conundrums that are right up there with the best in any genre. It's outstanding work, and the puzzles always feel congruous to the world – they feel like the ancient machinations of Aegean geniuses, built to keep out the world's evil but malleable enough for a crazed warrior like Kratos to brute-force his way through.

Of course, it's the spectacle that will surely get everyone talking. The previously mentioned opening is something else, but there's still plenty of grandiose battling and landscape-scaling to behold later on in the game. A sizeable chunk takes place in one decrepit statue (that happens to be about 500 feet tall) and is such an arresting and

A masterclass in pace and forward movement

oddly believable place that you can almost picture the walls of design diagrams it took to actually build it. The whole game is like that really – there's no visual filler, just idea after idea after idea, creativity clearly flowing for this instalment.

And yes, the combat doesn't have the depth of the genre's true stars – it lacks the technique of *Metal Gear Rising*, or the complexity of *DmC*, but it's not too far behind. Mastering the right-stick roll, the combo list and the parry will take a full playthrough and more, and there are subtleties hidden within the elemental system that'll take even longer to figure out.

More importantly, though, while *God Of War: Ascension* might not be purpose built to push your thumbs to a black belt level, it does something else. It makes you feel horrendously violent in a really, really thrilling way. It's the type of thing you could never tell a concerned parent or a politician, but there's something utterly primal about tearing a mythical creature's head off or slashing its belly open and watching the guts pour out. Silly, gruesome and glorious.

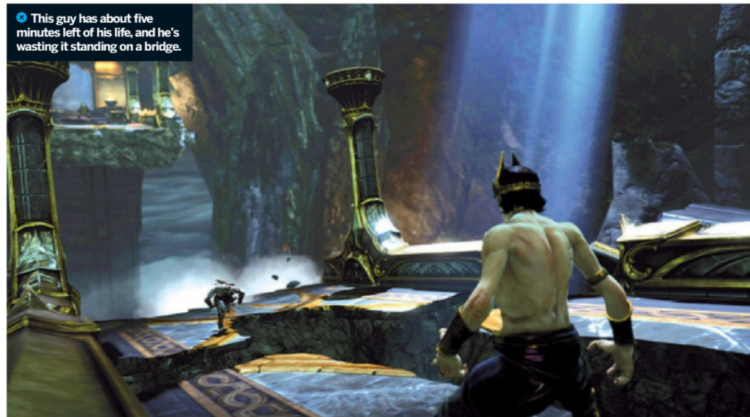
At the time of writing, the online portion of the package was unable to be tested, but sizeable time with the recent PS Plus beta suggests that it's a worthy inclusion. It sits somewhere between the madness of *PlayStation All-Stars* and a first-person shooter of all things, and transposes the brutality of *God Of War* into a spectacular online melee.

Crucially, any concerns that multiplayer development would eat into the campaign



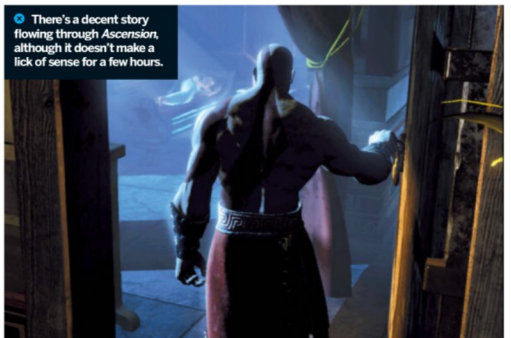


This guy is big. Like, really big. Just how Kratos likes 'em.



This guy has about five minutes left of his life, and he's wasting it standing on a bridge.

There's a decent story flowing through *Ascension*, although it doesn't make a lick of sense for a few hours.



and treat the single-player as the lesser component can be brushed aside. Even the merest suggestion of the word 'compromised' seems plain daft when you work your way through the majesty that is *Ascension's* story. A few minor checkpointing niggles aside and a slight over-reliance on sections where you slide down a hill like Mario, it's tough to fault. It's longer than most action games too (and a lot longer than *Metal Gear Rising*), it's expertly paced, and it is, in the truest sense of the word, awesome.

Some may have tired of Kratos' exploits, but for us, the *God Of War* universe is one of the most complete and compelling in all of videogames. The guys at Sony Santa Monica

have done a better job of crafting a fitting ode to the endless expanses of Greek mythology than Hollywood and its ropery *Clash Of The Titans* movies, and *Ascension* might just be its best game yet. Glorious.

Jon Denton

VERDICT

A supremely spectacular trip back into ancient Greece, with reworked combat, more puzzles and superb pacing. As the PS3 prepares to be taken over by the next generation, it's putting on its most impressive fight yet. Amazing stuff.

90%

RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Aliens: Colonial Marines

Game over, man,
game over...



DETAILS

Publisher
Sega
Developer
Gearbox Software
Price
£49.99
Players
1-4
Genre
FPS
Age Rating
18
Website
www.sega.co.uk/
alienscolonialmarines
Twitter
@GearboxSoftware
Facebook
facebook.com/
GearboxSoftware



The first big warning sign is during the opening credits. Four separate developers flash on screen at once, all responsible in part for the coming experience. An old adage about too many cooks spoiling a broth comes to mind, doubt already setting in.

Colonial Marines has been in development, in one form or another, for over 13 years, originally set to be published by Fox and EA in 2001. A lot has changed since then, with the

You should never, EVER, be able to
best a Xenomorph in melee combat

original game being cancelled and Sega and Gearbox announcing they were working on a new version in 2006.

In the seven years since, four different developers have had a part in making *Colonial Marines*, and it shows. This is an unfinished mess of a game that should have been released years ago.

Colonial Marines is a direct sequel to the *Aliens* film, and takes its inspiration from the flick wholesale. The opening cinematic and the credits that overlay it are eerily

reminiscent of the movie's opening moments, and do a good job of getting you in the mood for some xeno-busting action. The decent presentation doesn't last much further than this opening minute, unfortunately.

Players are Corporal Christopher Winter, but you'd be forgiven for forgetting that fact. Winter is an incredibly standard marine guy with no discernable character, surrounded by plenty of others cut from exactly the same cloth. This is kind of the point – the marines

in *Aliens* are part of the reason the stereotype even exists now, and you can't fault the game for being faithful. Still, it

wouldn't have hurt to make these guys a tiny bit interesting.

The story assumes extensive prior knowledge of *Aliens*, jumping right into things without much explanation. The U.S.S. Sulaco, the ship that Ripley, Hicks and co escape in at the end of that film, has re-appeared above LV-426, the planet they were running away from in the first place. The U.S. Colonial Marine Corps send in some dudes to investigate and the rest is elementary.

The story, and the game as a whole, is full of nods and references to *Aliens* and the larger film franchise. These are pretty great for fans, from little things like noticing the lockers of Hicks, Hudson and the others on the Sulaco to revisiting some very familiar settings from the first two films. The faithfulness to the franchise is the best thing about *Colonial Marines*, but you'd have to be an extremely dedicated fan to forgive it for all its indiscretions.

Gameplay is standard FPS fare, with the same control set up popularised by *Call Of Duty* and used by every game since. You all know the basics. Players can carry two

Well, this can only get better.



weapons at once, plus a pistol and grenades. Progressing in the game gains experience to increase rank, which in turn unlocks upgrades to your weapons. The range of customisation isn't that extensive, but it's still kind of neat to add a laser sight to your pulse rifle or increase the stopping power of your trusty pump-action shotgun.

For our money, the last truly great *Aliens* game was the PC-only *Aliens vs Predator 2*, released back in 2001. The opening stage of the marine campaign in *AvP2* is a masterful example of how to build tension. At least thirty minutes pass with nothing to shoot, the creeping loneliness and dark corridors playing on your psyche. Not until the player is deep inside the alien hive, trying to rescue a friend, do the titular monsters appear en masse. What follows is a terrifying escape





• Environments are muddy and low rez. Some of them look proper nasty up close.



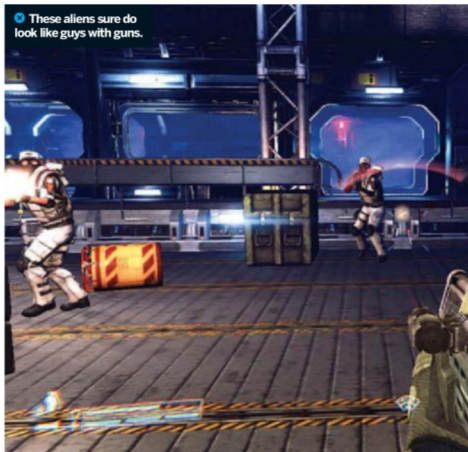
• The time it takes for textures to load is awful.



TOOLS OF THE TRADE

This is my BOOMstick

COLONIAL MARINES CONTAINS a number of "legendary weapons" for players to find, previously owned by the characters in *Aliens* and now all yours. These tend to be a bit more powerful than the standard type – we found Hicks' shotgun early on and used it solidly throughout. Look out for when you find Vasquez's smart gun, complete with her doo-rag tied to the handle. Neat little touches like this are spread throughout, and you can tell the development team loved the source material. There might even be a few references to more recent films set in the same universe, if you keep an eye out...



• These aliens sure do look like guys with guns.



from the hive, made all the more effective by the great buildup.

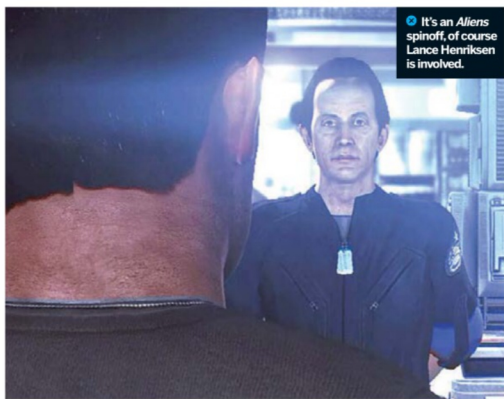
Colonial Marines tries to copy this method but it falls flat. Players wander around for five minutes, nothing much happens, then some aliens appear. It's about as scary as it sounds. In fairness, the game is mimicking the action-heavy *Aliens* rather than the horror-focused first or third films. Scars are not the priority in *Colonial Marines*; the opening feels almost like an obligation to get out the way so you can get into the shooting. And what doesn't help is that the shooting feels a bit crap.

The pulse rifle, favoured weapon of *Aliens* fans everywhere, is woefully inaccurate, and later unlockable long range weapons are not much better. Aiming is imprecise and an utter pain, with shooting from the hip often the

preferred option. Lack of a crosshair doesn't make this easy, although the unlockable laser sights do help. In a game that revolves around shooting, the shooting itself shouldn't feel like something you have to struggle against.

Of course, the nasty xenomorphs want to get up close and claw your face off, so inaccurate guns are not a huge issue. A tidy shotgun blast will see off most of these foes.

Fighting the xenos is a bit hit-and-miss. When you are being swarmed from all angles, desperately trying to cap them all before they get close to you, it can be pretty thrilling. The problem is they go down too easy, seeming far too fragile to be a threat. Even if they do get close, you can just melee attack them with the butt of your gun. It feels wrong. You should never, EVER, be able to best a Xenomorph in melee combat. These >



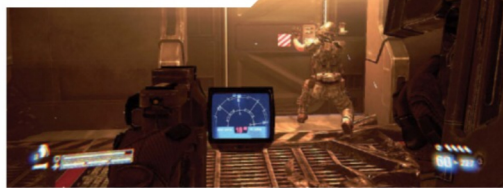
• It's an *Aliens* spinoff, of course Lance Henriksen is involved.

Or you could try



Aliens vs Predator Issue 189
Not great, but at least it's better than this 79%

REVIEW



MEET THE ALIENS

We all know the standard Xenomorph, but *Colonial Marines* throws some new alien types into the mix

LURKERS

Based on the original Alien design from the first film, these sneaky bastards will pounce on you when you least expect it, blending in with the scenery until it's too late and you've got two sets of teeth boring into your eyes. Solution: shoot them in the face.



BOILERS

Weird, blind creatures that track you off sound. If they find you, they explode in a shower of acid, and you best believe you won't survive it. Sneaking past them is the method to success here.



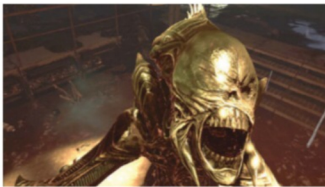
SPITTERS

These guys go down easy, but can shoot ranged acidic attacks at you from a distance. Just when you think you know the answers, the xenomorphs change the questions! Prolific sidestepping is needed to dodge their gooey onslaught.



CRUSHERS

Gigantic, armoured aliens that charge at you like a terrifying rhino. These guys take a hell of a kicking before they go down, so get ready to run for your life. Alternatively, find the nearest power-loader to even the odds!



> supposed killing machines quickly become little but cannon fodder.

If only aliens were all you fight. That's right, Winter and co. also find themselves fighting what seems like an endless army of mercenaries from the rather morally questionable Weyland-Yutani corporation, and this is when the game gets really awful.

You can forgive the aliens for having bad AI – all they do is run at you – but the enemy soldier intelligence is horrendous, often sitting themselves behind a piece of cover and staying there, indefinitely. Yet their aim is always perfect, with the player often getting hit despite seemingly being in cover.

Fighting human opponents is a total chore, yet it makes up almost half of the entire game. When you react with relief upon seeing some aliens again, you know the game isn't sending out the right signals. Nobody, and we mean nobody, buys an FPS based on *Aliens* hoping to shoot normal people. It's horrible.

This feels like a game designed ten years ago. Soldiers will endlessly respawn from certain areas until you reach a specific point or pull a lever. Find the respawn point and you can witness them pop into existence on a regular timer. Horrible boss battles drag on for much longer than they should, with the player unaware if they are hurting them or doing the complete wrong thing. Even little things, like having to press a button to pick up health kits and ammo, just feel antiquated. It feels like you can see the carcass of the original game, dragged to release with various modern touches bolted on to the side.

It's also extremely buggy. Aliens get stuck on scenery, teammates appear and disappear at random, objectives don't trigger, and so on. It's not uncommon to have your

Environment textures are blurry and undetailed, and often take over ten seconds to pop-in

teammates and enemies standing right next to each other, completely oblivious. Bad guys gun straight for you, totally ignoring everyone else.

One interesting design choice is the total lack of a HUD on higher difficulty levels. It's a brave idea to enhance immersion, but in practice it's just annoying. Having absolutely no way to check your current health or armour level is infuriating, and players have to go into the weapon change menu to check ammo levels. The pulse rifle has the nifty LED ammo counter on the side, but for everything else it's just a matter of guessing.

Another negative effect of the protracted development cycle is the fact that *Colonial Marines* is one of the absolute ugliest games we have ever played. Model animation is jerky and unrealistic, and lip-syncing just doesn't exist. Environment textures are blurry and undetailed, and often take over ten seconds to pop-in after loading the game.

Many items lying around the levels are so blocky and lacking in polygons that they look like PS2-era assets merely upscaled for a higher resolution. Screen tearing is incredibly abundant, even when nothing is happening and the player is standing still. Even the xenomorphs themselves look bad, with dull dark textures instead of the shiny, disturbing gleam of the films. There are games that launched with the PS3 that look far better than *Colonial Marines*.

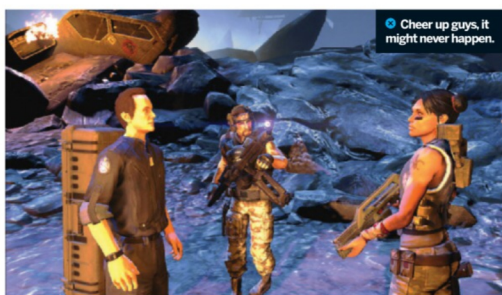
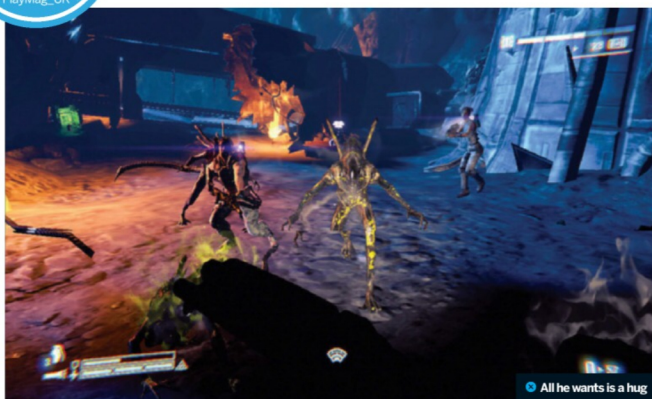
The campaign will take you around six or seven hours, but it's way too easy. We

Previously...
in Play



Issue 227

"We're not purists, but fear is a major selling point of this franchise, and without it you've got diddly."



finished it on the hardest, "Ultimate Badass" difficulty in that time with little trouble, only a couple of points requiring more than a single restart. The final "boss battle" is an utter joke, consisting of literally no more than pulling some levers. The following cutscene seems to set up some big plot points for what feels like the final third of the game, but then bam, end credits. It's a bizarrely abrupt end that makes the game feel even more unfinished.

Lance Henriksen and Michael Biehn lend their voices to the game to add some star power, with differing results. Henriksen sounds great as always, a consummate professional. Biehn on the other hand sounds like he would rather be anywhere else, phoning it in and almost aware of the crouch he is lending his voice to. It's a bad throwback to when most Hollywood voice acting was of a similar quality.

Colonial Marines features extensive online multiplayer modes, housing xeno vs. marines action over a number of game types. These encounters are far sharper

than anything in the campaign, and it may be because Gearbox itself was responsible for this. One mode, Escape, where a pack of marines are tracked by a swarm of aliens, captures the spirit of the films appropriately.

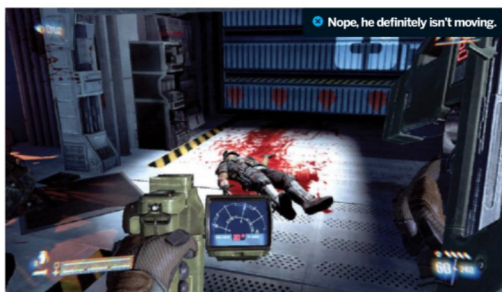
Aliens: Colonial Marines is a total disappointment, a victim of the huge amount of time it's taken to make and the number of different developers responsible for various parts of it. It blows our tiny minds how people manage to keep mucking up *Aliens* games, but this is another one to avoid.

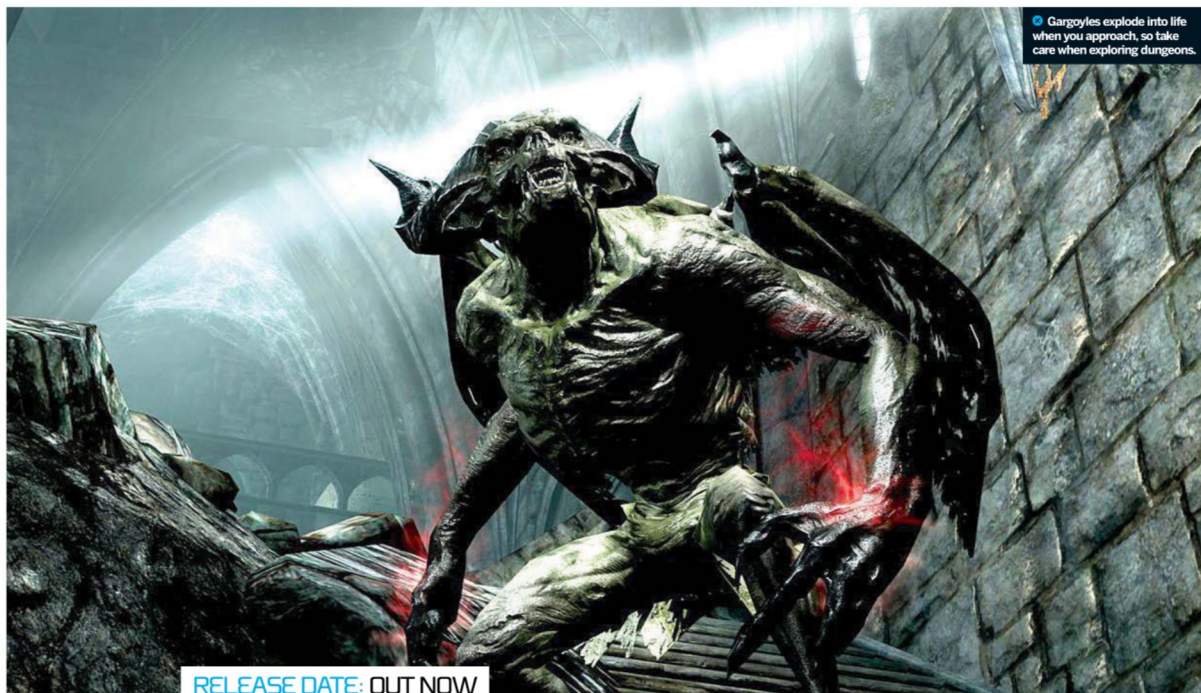
Sam Smith

VERDICT

Buggy, ugly, and somehow unfinished after ten years, *Aliens: Colonial Marines* is a huge disappointment. We desperately wanted a great *Aliens* FPS, and unfortunately we are still waiting. Diehard fans will find small things to enjoy, but everyone else should steer clear.

40%





• Gargoyles explode into life when you approach, so take care when exploring dungeons.

RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW



DETAILS

Publisher
Bethesda
Developer
Bethesda
Australia
Price
£11.99
Players
1
Genre
RPG
Age Rating
15+
Website
elderscrolls.com
Twitter
@BethBlog
Facebook
facebook.com/elderscrolls

TES V: Skyrim – Dawnguard

Defeated by a door

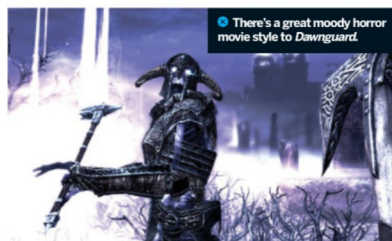
DLC Do you know how a vampire picks things up? Us neither. We presume it's a hilarious calamity involving said item slipping upwards and out the vampire's hands with a comedy noise, followed by a frantic attempt to catch it and then the item smashing on the floor in a million pieces of scattered disappointment. We only say this because in *Dawnguard*, Vampire Lords can't pick things up.

Which is odd because picking things up is the main point of *Skyrim* and playing as a Vampire Lord is the main point of *Dawnguard*.

As it turns out, Vampire Lords also can't access their inventory, loot bodies, walk through small doorways or access the map. What useless creatures they are! Although they can drain life, summon gargoyles and choke enemies from afar, so there is that.

And thus lies the contradiction at the heart of *Dawnguard*, a game where you need to keep switching from your normal form to Vampire Lord to get the most out of the DLC and then switching back again because of the weird restrictions placed on what the Vampire Lord can actually do. The whole process is made far more painful than it should be by the stuttering, awkward animation transitioning between each form that takes about six or seven seconds. If it doesn't sound like much, consider that time is effectively doubled if you're changing between forms just for the sake of a menial task like picking up a potion or, god forbid, walking through a door.

It's a shame because the *Dawnguard* quest itself is a meaty one, clocking in at around the ten hours mark (more if you fanny about exploring and get stuck in small doorways), while the new locations spice up the well-worn formula for *Skyrim* veterans. There are



• There's a great moody horror movie style to *Dawnguard*.

dragon battles, there are traps, there are side-quests, there are new weapons, there are new characters. Basically, it's a whole slice of new *Skyrim* to thoroughly digest.

Yet everything is tainted with the disappointment and clumsiness of the Vampire Lord implementation while the B-side, playing as the *Dawnguard* going up against the undead, feels a little too generic and unambitious in comparison. So it's a well-deserved Medal Of Try for Bethesda along with a firm handshake, but as we lean forward to congratulate them on serving up *Skyrim* DLC on PS3 after such a long wait, we can't help feeling like *Dawnguard* represents a weaker addition to the mammoth RPG. Not quite what we were hoping for.

Ryan King

VERDICT

It's fresh *Skyrim* and a lot of it, which is obviously good. On the other hand, the wonky design of the Vampire Lord undermines what should be the standout idea, and so there's a strong whiff of disappointment also present in *Dawnguard*.

70%



In this series



Shivering Isles Issue 152
It's old now but the Oblivion DLC raised expectations for all DLC. 99%



RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

• You'll know the DLC has kicked off when you're attacked by a couple of these guys.

TES V: Skyrim – Dragonborn

Visit Solstheim, leave on the back of a dragon



• Solstheim is populated by Dunmer, which will make fans feel all nostalgic for *The Elder Scrolls III*.



• If you don't feel like riding dragons, you can still kill them.



• This ugly plane of Oblivion is populated with ugly creatures.



DETAILS

Publisher
Bethesda
Developer
Bethesda
Australia
Price
£12.99
Players
1
Genre
RPG
Age Rating
15+
Website
elderscrolls.com
Twitter
@BethBlog
Facebook
facebook.com/elderscrolls

DLC

If the delay in the arrival of *Skyrim* DLC to PS3 was due to bugs, then thank the Nine (or Eight, if you abide by the White-Gold Concordat) that Bethesda didn't just release *Dragonborn* back in December, because even after those extra weeks it's buggier than the lunar rover. Anyone who's played the PS3 version of the game should know the drill: expect the game to freeze, important quest companions to get stuck or disappear completely, weapons to turn invisible, and more. If you can't bear a game that doesn't run perfectly, well, you've probably already given up on *Skyrim*. For everyone else, remember to save regularly, and persevere; *Dragonborn* is totally worth it.

First, however, temper your expectations of the prize around which *Dragonborn* is built. The ability to ride dragons, which you gain after the eight or so hours of main quest, is nowhere near as fun as it should be. Yes, you get to look down on the world from on high, but that just reminds you that that world is made up of repeated textures. You get to command your dragon steed to attack targets, but you don't actually get to direct its flight. You can use it to fast travel, but you can't fly it to somewhere you haven't been.

Anti-climax aside, *Dragonborn* still has plenty to offer, which will be especially attractive to those who've already spent dozens of hours in *Skyrim*. You get a whole new island to explore, and that means new quests, characters, enemies, abilities,

and items. Solstheim actually appeared in *Morrowind* expansion *Bloodmoon*, and while it has changed since then it'll still invoke nostalgia in those who've been there before. From the ashen wastes to the snowy mountains, the isle is filled with potentials for adventure, whether you're interested in talking to the native Dunmer or nature-loving Skaal Nords, starting a fight with a Werebear or tiny but ferocious Riekling, or just poking around for hidden caves and loot.

And the main quest is a solid introduction to this world. Though you spend a lot of time in a plane of Oblivion that looks impressive at first but soon gets repetitive and dull, you also get to make friends in the Skaal village, trek through some Dwemer ruins with an unconvincingly voiced guide, and use a magical elevator in a house grown from a fungus. In the same package, *Dragonborn* provides more of the same *Skyrim* experience those who've long since finished the base game need, but with plenty of completely new content to keep things fresh.

Jordan Erica Webber

VERDICT

Dragonborn is full of bugs and its biggest selling point is a major disappointment. But this expansion has so much to offer that it's still more than worth the asking price, and just what fans are looking for.

84%

In this series



TESV: *Skyrim* Issue 212
Interested in *Dragonborn* but haven't played *Skyrim*? What are you waiting for? 93%

RELEASE DATE: 27 MARCH

Sly Cooper: Thieves in Time

Time stands still



DETAILS

Publisher
Sony
Developer
Sanzaru Games
Price
£44.99
Players
1
Genre
Platformer
Age Rating
7
Website
www.slycooper.com
Twitter
@SanzaruGames
Facebook
facebook.com/Sanzaru

PS3

VITA

Considering the extent to which they once ruled PlayStation, we are actually lacking when it comes to decent 3D platformers these days. A style of game that seemingly died out with the PS2, *Sly Cooper: Thieves in Time* is a deliberate throwback that has a lot of love for the legacy of Sucker Punch's thieve-'em-up platformer trilogy, but fails to find an exciting way to build on its decade-old formula.

The surprisingly intrusive story begins in Paris, as Sly, turtle-in-a-rocket-wheelchair Bentley and belligerent hippo Murray escape a heist into the realms of time, where they get involved with the wibbly-wobbly adventures of Sly's well-travelled group of ancestors, taking them across wild west, samurai, medieval and other themed settings. There are specific bad guys in one and a mini-story to beat, with an overarching tale linking them all together.

These very specific time periods result in some interesting if inconsistently designed hub levels where there are bottles to collect, enemies to rob from and treasure to find, as well as story missions to pick up on – it's very much in the ballpark of Sucker Punch's *Sly*

games, and the mechanics of playing as Sly are basically the same, with a still-engaging mixture of stealth and platforming that demands you use the world around you effectively to complete sections.

It's the other characters that let it down. Murray and Bentley offer different styles of play that are nowhere near as nuanced, the former of which just beats things up via a boring button mash and the latter of which lacks a satisfying combat move as he slaps bombs around. Plus, neither really dovetail with platforming in the same way that Sly does, and since navigating environments comprises most of the fun in *Thieves in Time*, these sections effectively feel like filler – and there are far too many of them that are obligatory. While it's nice that you have a hideout where you can choose between the three protagonists in your off-mission moments (and later on, the respective Cooper ancestors when they enter the frame), there's not a single incentive to venture out into the open world bits with the other two characters.

This automatically damages the pace of the experience, being forced to play as Sly's slightly arbitrary extended cast – and it's not helped by

Sly's ancestors, either, all of whom have specific abilities that act as trundled-out gimmicks in the world. The Wild West one is the best, as it's essentially a tribute to *Red Dead Redemption*'s Dead Eye feature, where players can target multiple enemies or objects before the game automatically blasts them out. In all cases, however, these specific moves become the focus of every later level set in their respective world, and therefore outstay their welcome. On Vita, these abilities are awkwardly activated via the touch screen, too, making it even less fun to play as these souped-up versions of Sly.

When the platforming is pure Sly, though, *Thieves in Time* can be terrific fun, and some of the worlds do look beautiful in their composition. They're all microcosms of well-worn fictional locales with little details that match up nicely, with an impressive sense of verticality, too – it's fun to just jump in as Sly, track down the collectables and make money by stealing objects from foes, even when there's no mission attached. Even so, by the climax of each world you'll be ready to leave; there just aren't enough clever ideas to keep the story bits from going stale, and the endless stream



● The variety of locations is certainly a plus for Sly.



● Yeah, this genre hasn't really moved on too much.



● Deliberately evocative of Disney's *Aladdin*, of course.

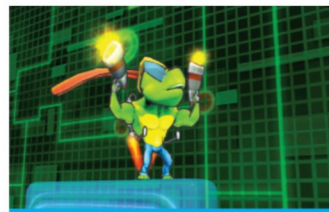
In this series



Sly Raccoon Issue 98
Compact and beautiful, the original Sly is still the best in the series. **80%**



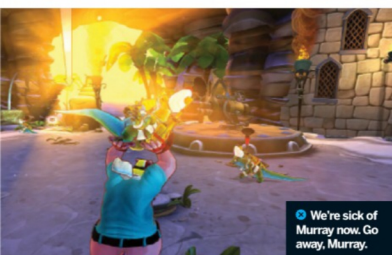
● All the levels pan out in basically the same way.



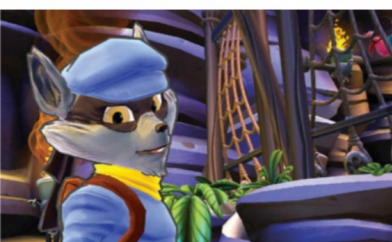
TURTLE HACKER

One of Sly's better minigame offerings

BENTLEY HAS THE ability to hack computers, which is represented in *Thieves In Time* by a novel twin-stick shooter where you have to carry keys and clear gates, all with a very *Iron*-like visual vibe. This is among the better ideas the game has, as you can switch between two different types of avatar when clearing these sections – the basic vessel, which can carry objects and is weak against enemies, and the firearm-heavy combat model. It all gives you a nice break from platforming, which is usually all the game has to offer.



● We're sick of Murray now. Go away, Murray.



● Stuck in the past, we're not sure Sly has a future beyond *Thieves In Time*.

of cutscenes (not all of which are skippable, unforgivably) grind down your interest in Sly and his pals.

It's a shame, really, that only the larger levels reflect the recent progress of videogames in the latest *Sly Cooper* instalment – a few years ago, Naughty Dog was considering a new *Jak* title, before finally settling on making an all-new franchise instead: *The Last Of Us*. The reasoning for leaving Jak behind was that it couldn't think of way to incorporate new ideas into the series while still keeping the core of what it was, and that's a similar situation that now faces *Sly Cooper*. The basic gameplay is still excellently simple fun in *Thieves In Time*, but where else can you take a character and design paradigm like this? Sanzaru took the nostalgia route, and it's only moderately paid off.

For anyone who truly did adore the three Sly games on PS2, though, this is a pleasant enough reprise. *Sly Cooper* deserved a late revival, and if Sanzaru gets another shot at the series, perhaps it can further hone in on its main character to get the classic formula right again.

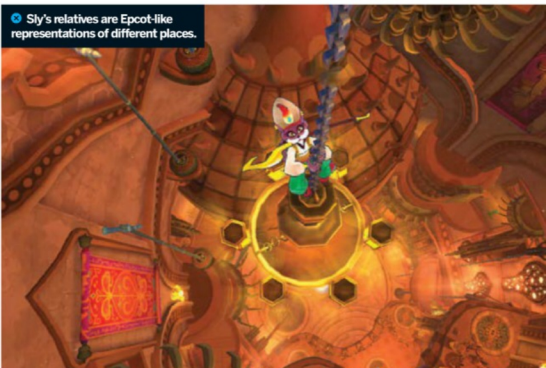
Samuel Roberts

VERDICT

The occasional flash of design ingenuity isn't enough to save Sly's revival from being just slightly above average. There are too many boring sections with Sly's extended, arbitrary cast, and levels that aren't weighty enough to sustain interest – a patchy return for Cooper.

60%

● Sly's relatives are Epcot-like representations of different places.





Not particularly nice to look at these days, but still nice to have on one disc.

RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW



DETAILS

Publisher
Square Enix
Developer
IO Interactive
Price
£29.99
Players
1
Genre
Stealth
Age Rating
18
Website
www.hitman.com
Twitter
@Hitman
Facebook
facebook.com/
Hitman

PS3

Hitman's re-release in HD seems like a response to people who didn't enjoy *Absolution* (we're not in that group, it's worth pointing out). "You want old *Hitman*? Have ALL the old *Hitman*!" bellows Captain Square Enix, on his porch in his dungarees, dropping the PS2's three seminal assassination-based instalments onto one PS3 Blu-ray and firing it into the pitchfork-waving crowd. Aside from the controls, which speak of a time before refined third-person shooting and cover systems, *Hitman* holds up incredibly well in its previous iteration – even if the port itself isn't much to write home about.

This falls somewhere between the likes of the *Metal Gear* collection and the turgid conversion that was the *Silent Hill* collection in terms of its conversion quality, and *Blood Money* in particular looks very nice, with better detail in terms of character models and environments than the other two. Thankfully, *Silent Assassin*

and *Contracts* have fantastic art direction on their side, and what they lacked in terms of polish, IO made up for it by taking the mundane and transforming it into something beautiful. Each level feels delicately constructed, each room with a purpose – it's quite extraordinary how far ahead of the curve these levels still are.

The only struggle is the controls, which IO improved over the course of the series but never in a significant way. You have to readjust to Agent 47 being clumsy with everything from swinging his fiber wire to shooting a weapon – it's a struggle, but still a worthwhile one to enjoy everything else the level design has to offer. Be warned, though, that after years of comfortable *Uncharted*-style cover shooting and increasingly frequent checkpoints, you really have to train yourself to accept failure again. *Hitman* on PS2 was unforgiving, and it's not immediately easy to drop back into that less than intuitive mentality.



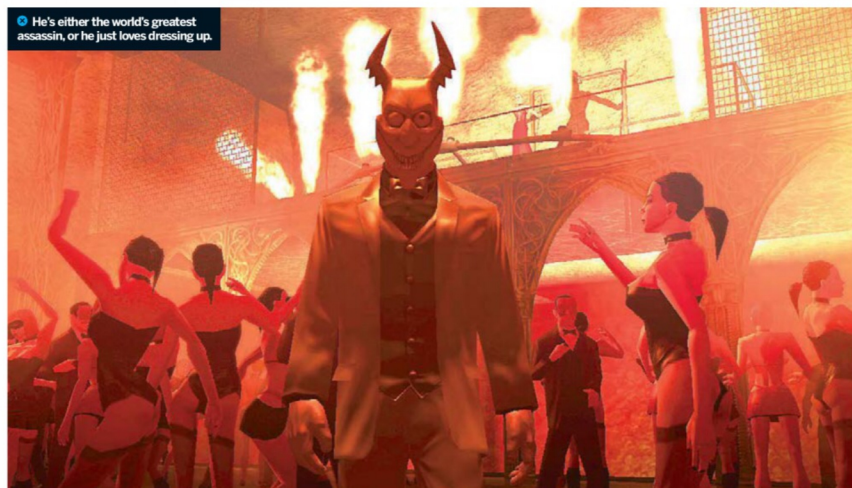
On that basis, we'd recommend the HD trilogy more to people who are already familiar with the series' trappings over newer fans who missed it completely the first time around – purely on interface alone, *Hitman* doesn't feel contemporary in the way that the *God Of War* or *Team ICO* collections do, but putting up with this initial stumbling block is worthwhile just to sample level design at its smartest. Still, *Hitman HD Trilogy*'s lack of interesting extras or high-end presentation seems to signal the idea that such re-releases aren't as special as they used to be. Hopefully Square Enix's treatment of *Kingdom Hearts* and *Final Fantasy X* in HD will be a little more impressive.

Samuel Roberts

VERDICT

Not the cleanest port in the world, *Hitman HD Trilogy* nonetheless brings together three of the most beautifully complex experiences released on the PS2 for a reasonable price – if you can meet *Hitman*'s rough combat mechanics halfway, you won't be sorry for picking this up.

75%



He's either the world's greatest assassin, or he just loves dressing up.



In this series



Hitman Absolution Issue 225
Ignore the haters: this is a smart evolution of the series' formula. 93%

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RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Fist Of The North Star 2: Ken's Rage

Everybody was kung fu fighting... oh god...



PS3

Publisher Tecmo Koei Developer Koei Price £39.99
Players 1-2 Genre Beat-'em-up Age Rating 18+
Website www.kensrage.com Twitter @tecmokoeiurope
Facebook facebook.com/tecmoeurope

At this point in your gaming career, you will know if you like musou games or not. *Dynasty Warriors*, *Samurai Warriors*, *Warriors Orochi*, *Dynasty Warriors Gundam* and *Fist Of The North Star* are all based on the same thing – mashing the attack button until everything around you dies, with the odd special throw in. They aren't subtle games and *Fist Of The North Star 2* is no different.

Like its predecessor, it's a romp through the anime's storyline focused around Kenshiro and boss battles. There have been changes made since the original outing and not all of them good. There are far more cutscenes and comic panels interrupting Legends mode, some of which can't be skipped, and the scrolls based system of levelling up isn't that engaging to begin with and means lots of pointless micromanagement later when you don't have enough room for the new scrolls you obtain. You spend

far too long watching cutscenes and messing about in inventory menus for a game based on the angriest man alive.

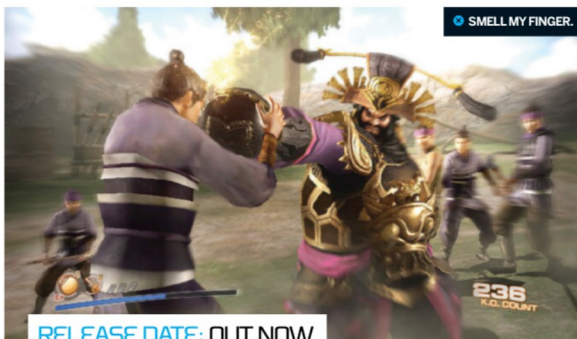
But this is counter-balanced by the main step forward, which is the amount of content. *Fist Of The North Star 2* is a huge game. Legends mode clocks in at around 15 hours, with Dream Mode essentially doubling that as you can play with all the characters in the game. It doesn't save the game if button-bashing isn't your bag to begin with but for fans, the wealth of content and ability to play through it via online co-op makes this worth it.

Ryan King

VERDICT

No real progression means this is one for the hardcore fans only but the staggering amount of content plus online co-op does help make up for disappointing changes elsewhere.

58%



RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Dynasty Warriors 7: Empires

Not like the film magazine



PS3

Publisher Tecmo Koei Developer In-house Price £39.99
Players 1-2 Genre Hack and slash Age Rating 16+
Website www.dynastywarriors7eu.uk/index
Twitter @KOEIWarriors Facebook facebook.com/koeigames

We've all been here before. A new *Dynasty Warriors* game comes out, then a bit later gets an *Xtreme Legends* expansion, then a bit after that gets an *Empires* one. It's been exactly the same since the PlayStation 2 days, and the model is getting extremely dated. What may have been acceptable back then now seems practically archaic in a world of digital distribution and downloadable content.

As with past *Empires* expansions, the key thing on offer here is Empire Mode, which adds a strategy spin on the classic hack and slash *Dynasty Warriors* gameplay. Choosing a character that can either be the ruler of an empire, subservient to one, or a free mercenary, players are left to make their way in ancient China. You can pursue set goals or create your own destiny, but all it ever really boils down to is the same old battles.

These are practically identical to *Dynasty Warriors 7*, which, while

slightly better than past iterations, is still the same tired gameplay you know and expect. Battles seem harder and longer than before, only extending the feeling of meaningless grinding. None of the strategy elements really add anything, merely dictating what and where the next fight will be.

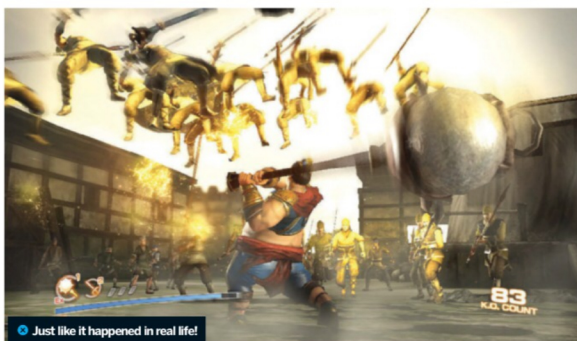
With *Dynasty Warriors 8* out in Japan and sure to be here before long, *Empires* feels both unnecessary and slightly insulting as a full disc release when it could so easily be cheap DLC, and if it were would be a lot more welcome. For super hardcore fans only.

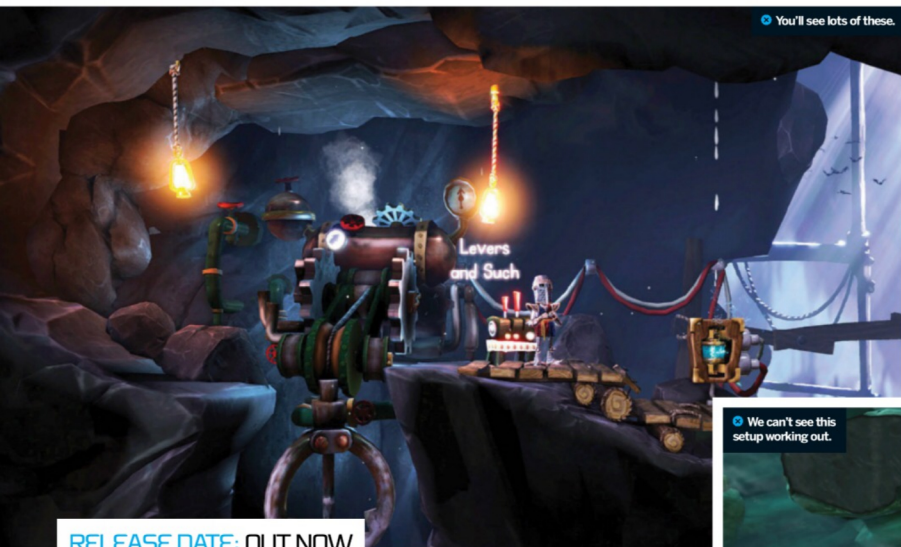
Sam Smith

VERDICT

Dynasty Warriors 7: Empires is a totally unnecessary expansion that actually adds very little. The battles are exactly the same and the strategy elements are vague and unimportant. Even *Dynasty Warriors* fans will find little to enjoy here.

40%





RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

The Cave

Double Fine go spelunking



DETAILS

Publisher
Sega
Developer
Double Fine
Price
£9.99
Players
1-3
Genre
Puzzle/Platformer
Age Rating
13+
Website
thecavegame.com
Twitter
@doublefine
Facebook
facebook.com/
doublefineproductions

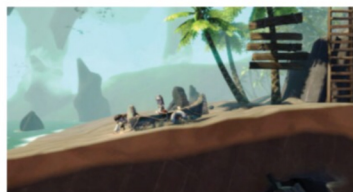


The Cave probably wouldn't be made at any other studio. This is Double Fine through and through, from the cartoony art style and graphics, to the opening monologue by the sentient Cave itself, given all the faux pompous bluster in the world. That's not to say *The Cave* is laugh a minute stuff though. It's funny, but laden with a hefty misanthropic streak. Pitch black gallows humour is the order of the day (no surprise seeing as this is the first collaboration between Tim Schafer and writer Ron Gilbert in absolutely yonks) and it helps elevate *The Cave* from a competent but fiddly puzzle-platformer to a good one. Imagine *Limbo* by

the *Naked Gun* team and you have an idea of what's going on here.

The idea of *The Cave* is simple. You pick three out of seven potential spelunkers (all given suitably *Tales From The Crypt* style introductions) all with their own special powers, and make your way through the gloomy labyrinth, which changes to suit the personality of your three selected characters. What follows is a myriad of lever pulling, trial and error dying and finicky platforming. It's a tad annoying as well, having to shift your three characters about one by one (unless you're in the enviable position of having friends to play with), and tends to

That monk in the top right looks a right smug prick.



We can't see this setup working out.



result in lots of backtracking. Puzzles can be fiendish, but a few of them just involve finding something from somewhere you haven't checked yet, so scoping out the entire area is recommended before you attempt progress. Death is mercifully treated in the same way as *Limbo*, in that you'll respawn instantly if you fall into a pit of spikes, drown or get burnt to a cinder. However, some iffy controls can have you moving a step further than you'd like and see you constantly respawning, much to the merriment of *The Cave* itself (although it shuts up after a while).

It's irritating in bits, but it digs its way into being recommended simply by being so bloody nasty and intriguing. Finding out just what awful bastards your characters are as they trick and cheat their way through, often to the detriment of other characters they meet in *The Cave* (including an ennui stricken shopkeeper and a damsel in distress that just wants to be an electrician) is half the fun. Those that revel in the suffering of others will like this one.

Daniel Cairns

VERDICT

It's not as good as other Double Fine efforts like *Stacking* and *Costume Quest*, but there's enough character and intrigue in *The Cave* to see you past the iffy platforming and sometimes dull puzzles.

71%





RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

The little spacecraft range from irritating to very irritating.



DETAILS

Publisher
Namco Bandai
Developer
Sandlot
Price
£34.99
Players
1-4
Genre
Third-person shooter
Age Rating
12+
Website
earthdefenseforce.net
Twitter
@NamcoBandaiUK
Facebook
www.facebook.com/EarthDefenseForce



There was a time, when you were younger, where you would discuss the future of games. You would chat merrily with your chums, each contributing ideas that would come together to form the greater whole – the perfect game. Back then – in those innocent years unclouded by cynicism and unfettered by any and all stresses – you and your friends invented *Earth Defense Force 2017*.

"What if you were a soldier?" Stinky Pete would offer up – he never had much of an imagination, but it was at least a starting point. Smithy, always there to take the bull by the horns, carried it on: "And you're fighting aliens, but they're giant – because bigger is ace!"

Everyone would nod sagely, because bigger is indeed ace. But something would be bugging Carl (he didn't want a nickname): "If they're soldiers they've got to say badass things – have them chant together things like 'EDF! EDF!... And give them like 200 weapons, even though you'd probably never get around

to using all of them even if you played it for dozens of hours."

Penny, as always, would have to stick her oar in: "What about tanks and helicopters and stuff? Soldiers have them, right? So put them in too." The group would agree, though Comical Andrew, the class clown, would demand they be 'pointless in the main part.' He was bigger than everyone else, so it would be agreed on.

Titch, otherwise known as Captain Foresight, could suggest the two other things nobody else would have come up with: "We need something to add to it when it gets re-released on another format. What about bringing in a character from earlier in the series?" "Yeah," Comical Andrew would naturally smirk, "But make it so you can't control Pale Wing until you've finished the original missions, just to annoy people."

Finally Clarkekey would pipe up with her sole contribution to the entire process: "And we should charge £34.99 for it!" And even though



you knew it was a stupid idea and totally against the budget ethos that you've instilled in your playground imagination-er-up, for some stupid reason, you went along with it.

Only now the tunnel vision that comes with a wave of creativity has lifted do you realise – that's a stupid price for a game that should be a tenner. But other than that? Other than that you've managed, somehow, to cobble together something far greater than the sum of its parts. And you should be proud.

lan Dransfield

VERDICT

Unpretentious in the extreme, comical by accident, irritating when it wants to be – *EDF 2017 Portable* is unashamedly dumb fun. Buggy, shonky, rough around the edges and far too expensive, it is nonetheless superb, stupid, slightly insane fun.

82%



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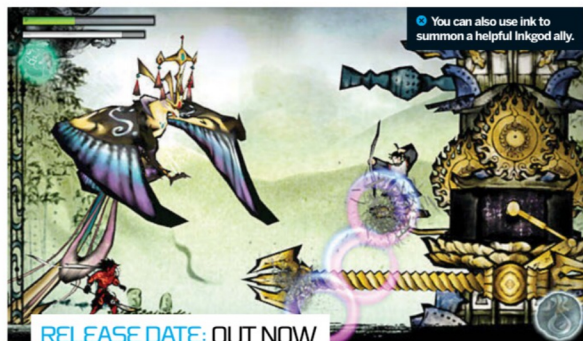
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RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Sumioni: Demon Arts



You'll only get out what you're willing to put in

Publisher Xseed Games **Developer** ACQUIRE Corp.
Price £7.99 **Players** 1 **Genre** Action **Age Rating** PEGI 12
Website www.sumioni.com **Twitter** @XSEEDGames
Facebook facebook.com/XSEEDGames

You can finish *Sumioni* in less time than *Call Of Duty Black Ops: Declassified*. In fact, you can get to an end in mere minutes. Leave it there, and you'll have experienced a short but pretty game the likes of which you'd expect to find on a tablet or phone or bank card or something.

But there are multiple endings. If the story, though poorly written and delivered in scrolling text, sparks your curiosity as to how else it might have concluded, then you can play again and try to access alternative routes.

However, since you can only deviate from the path to the likeliest ending by completing earlier levels with more speed and care, you'll have to train up first. Speed, for example, is hindered by the fact that the protagonist's painted attacks are fuelled by a paltry supply of ink, which in most cases must be slowly refilled by rubbing the rear touchscreen. Big monsters, in death, drop items that boost your ink and health meters. But you'll have to go through a lot of them before you've



bulkied up enough to make it onto the path towards a better future.

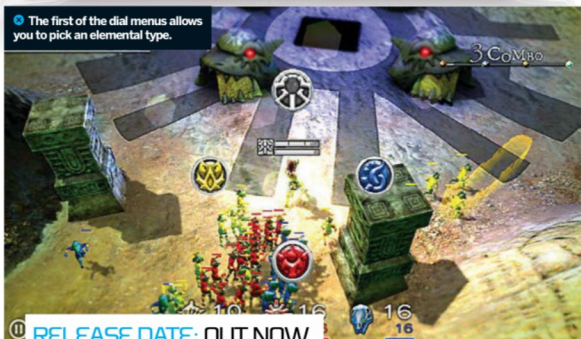
So while that first ending is the result of a quickie, there's actually a lot of game to slog through if you want to see the others. But for some, the idea of fighting through repetitive levels will be just that: a slog.

Jordan Erica Webber

VERDICT

Sumioni is certainly pretty, and fun at first, but the need to repeat the already repetitive levels in order to get anything other than that easiest ending may make you give up after those first few minutes.

46%



RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Orgarhythm

God sim plus rhythm plus strategy equals headache or hit?



Publisher Xseed Games **Developer** ACQUIRE Corp. and Nello
Price £11.99 **Players** 1-2 **Genre** God simulation/rhythm/strategy
Age Rating PEGI 12 **Website** www.orgarhythm.com **Twitter** @XSEEDGames
Facebook facebook.com/XSEEDGames

Orgarhythm looks unimpressive. Its antiquated menu – complete with buttons that look like they came out of a child's PowerPoint presentation – sets the scene for equally uninspiring levels. But those who can see through that may find something to love.

Unfortunately, you'll have to work past more than the aesthetic to find out if that applies to you. Several tutorials are needed before you'll even have a clue how to get through the first level. Forget explaining the game to friends: "You have to tap in rhythm to send out dancing troops to defend their dancing god... Here, I'll just show you."

This bizarre-sounding premise can actually make for an absorbing experience. But although it was clever for the developer to design a simple way to deal relatively complex strategy, the tradeoff is that things can get confusing. Each dial menu – elemental type, unit – appears in place of the previous and you can't cancel taps, so you have to think quickly.

Consequences of messing up are particularly frustrating to watch from afar. Everything is a jumble: the colourful lines that show your troops



where to stand, those same troops scurrying in the wrong direction, enemies that only became visible at the last moment because of the camera angle.

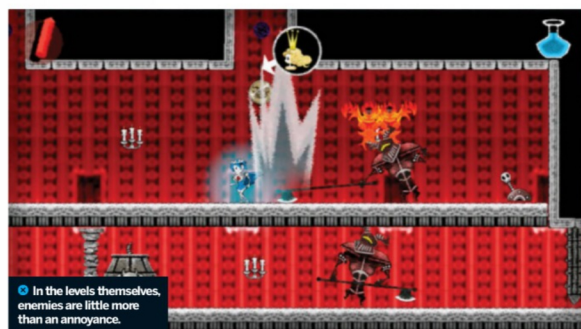
It's messy, and quickly gets repetitive too. For some, it'll just be headache-inducing. But for those who yearn for quirkiness, this could become a cult hit.

Jordan Erica Webber

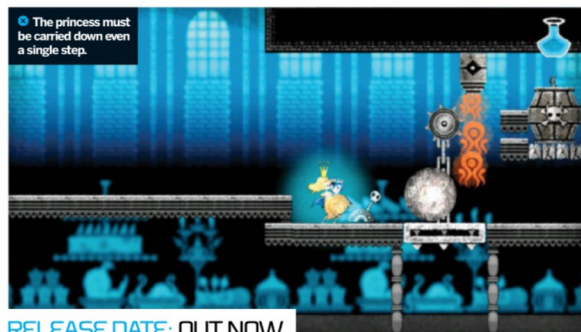
VERDICT

You'll have to look past its plain appearance and clunky mechanics, but if you've a soft spot for something a bit different you could love this one. Besides, how many other god sim/rhythm/strategy games have you played recently?

55%



● In the levels themselves, enemies are little more than an annoyance.



● The princess must be carried down even a single step.

RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Dokuro

Even a skeleton can fall in love



VITA

Publisher GungHo Online Entertainment Developer Game Arts
Price £11.99 Players 1 Genre Puzzle Age Rating PEGI 7
Website [@Gungho_Online](http://www.gunghoonline.com/Twitter)
Facebook facebook.com/GunghoOnline

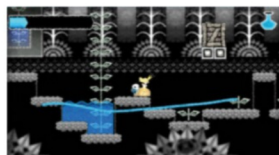
Dokuro uses a quirky chalk art style to tell the charming, if familiar, tale

of a hero who seeks to save a beautiful but clueless princess from a monster. Invisible to his beloved, the skeletal protagonist nonetheless works to clear a path as she walks ceaselessly to the right.

This tendency for the princess to meander into danger can be frustrating, but after the skeleton acquires the ability to temporarily transform into a prince – who is not only visible to the princess but can carry her around – the levels tend to include a step or something that thwarts her at the very start.

Once she is able to sometimes see him, the princess bestows on the hero a bell that increases his health. While this doesn't protect him from death by fire, falling, or being crushed, it does help stave off the irritating enemies, which are easily defeated by the hero's prince form but often respawn, and comes in especially handy in the boss fights, which are the most entertaining part of the game.

Unfortunately, the rest then falls short in comparison. A lot of the levels



The charming, if familiar, tale of a hero who seeks to save a beautiful but clueless princess

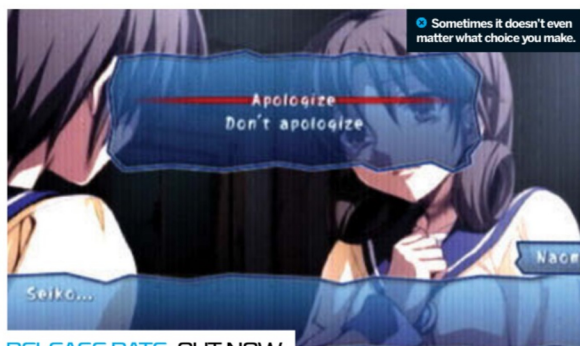
seem sloppily designed, requiring you to use trial and error or seemingly cheat the mechanics to pass. These stages might be short, but with 150 ahead of them some players may give up before they can find out if the skeleton ever gets the girl.

Jordan Erica Webber

VERDICT

Dokuro is certainly charming and different enough to be worth a look, especially given the relative lack of decent Vita titles. But its core structure lacks finesse, and some won't see this fairytale through to its end.

65%



● Sometimes it doesn't even matter what choice you make.

RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Corpse Party: Book of Shadows

A horrific story, but is it a horror to play?



PSP

Publisher XSEED Games Developer 5pb Price £11.99 Players 1
Genre Survival horror, Adventure Age Rating PEGI 16
Website www.corpsepartypsp.com Twitter @XSEEDGames
Facebook facebook.com/XSEEDGames

Corpse Party: Book of Shadows makes the player aware of their passive role from the get-go, with a 30-minute intro that consists of several still images and lots of questionably written/translated text. Your first input is inconsequential, and you soon learn that even when you can change things it's usually the choice that seems most sensible that has the worst effect.

If you do choose badly, you'll get a long monologue detailing your current character's gruesome fate, sometimes accompanied with a graphic image or two. Since you need to see all these "wrong ends" to unlock the final chapter, you'll want to save regularly, because while you can thankfully fast-forward through the text, the rest of your progress is laborious: traipsing through the dilapidated building in search of the trigger for the next event.

And although this is the part over which you have the most control, it's also the least enjoyable. You must search still

scenes that are often identical but for the occasional corpse with collectable name tag, looking for the often singular change that has occurred thanks to the convenience of a building that responds to the actions of its inhabitants.

With no real puzzle-solving aspects, this game gives you the impression of being forcibly led. Most will probably find that frustrating or even dull, but it is an effective way to encourage empathy for these characters who are just as powerless to change their fates.

Jordan Erica Webber

VERDICT

Corpse Party: Book Of Shadows does a good job of encapsulating the unique feel of Japanese horror, but only the most dedicated fans of the genre will persevere through the excessive description and dull game mechanics in order to unlock every ending here.

48%



● Graphic images and description combined with disgusting sound effects invoke a sense of horror.

15 UNDERSELLING PLAYSTATION 3 GAMES

WHETHER RELEASED AT THE WRONG TIME, DELIBERATELY AIMING FOR A SMALLER AUDIENCE OR JUST MARKETING POORLY, THESE ARE THE PS3 GAMES THAT DESERVE TO FIND A LARGER CROWD...



PLAY
SCORE
93%

SALES
830K

VANQUISH

Platinum Games makes better action games than anyone else, and *Vanquish* is arguably the best of all. Controlling Sam Gideon in the "Augmented Reaction Suit", players can run at crazy speeds, slide along the floor while being propelled by rocket jets, punch things so hard they explode, and have a gun that turns into OTHER GUNS. Why exactly did nobody buy this? Only 830,000 units had been sold worldwide by March 2011. *Vanquish* is pure videogame fun and deserves to be played.

15 Underselling PS3 Games



DARK SOULS

Dark Souls did alright, but not alright enough as far as we are concerned. It sold a respectable 1.19 million in the West by March 2012, but that just isn't enough! More people need to experience the beauty, the wonder, the crushing lows and the blissful highs of one of the greatest games ever made. Hopefully the announcement of *Dark Souls II* will get some people to go back and try the first one. Then buy *Demon's Souls* too for good measure!

PLAY
SCORE
90%

SALES
1.19M



CATHERINE

Games don't come much more mature than *Catherine*, a visual novel/puzzle game from Atlus, with a story that touches on themes of adulthood, fear of commitment, adultery, selfishness and more. An exploration of what it means to grow up and take responsibility, it's fun stuff. Add in some crazy dream-sequence puzzle sections and you have a title unlike any other. *Catherine* did alright, selling just under a million copies worldwide, but we'd love more people to try it.

PLAY
SCORE
61%

SALES
700K



VALKYRIA CHRONICLES

You know what? *Valkyria Chronicles* is not only one of the best games of the generation, but also the best PS3 exclusive. Yup, we said it. It deserves to be played by everyone, yet it's barely sold more than a million worldwide, over four years on. It did alright in Japan and spawned two PSP sequels and an anime series, but nothing can compare to the utter beauty and wonderfully idiosyncratic gameplay of the original. BUY IT.

PLAY
SCORE
82%

SALES
1.1M



ENSLAVED

Ninja Theory is getting lots of press now thanks to its *Devil May Cry* reboot (more on that later), but its previous game, *Enslaved: Odyssey to the West*, slipped way under the radar. NamcoBandai expected it to sell a million copies a month after release, but it only managed 700,000. A re-imagining of famous Chinese novel *Journey To The West*, *Enslaved* is a whimsical tale with beautiful art design, fun gameplay and loads of Andy Serkis! What's not to love?



PLAY
SCORE
83%

SALES
700K



PLAY SCORE **72%** SALES **700K**

LOLLIPOP CHAINSAW

Goichi Suda, known to most of us as Suda51, is responsible for some of the most inspired, crazy games ever made, including the masterpiece *Killer7*. *Lollipop Chainsaw* features cheerleader turned zombie hunter Juliette Starling and the decapitated (yet still alive) head of her boyfriend Nick. It only gets weirder from there. Fun combat, oodles of style and a properly insane story make this the definition of a cult hit. Its only sold around 700,000 units worldwide, although this still makes it Grasshopper's most successful game. A shame.

PLAY SCORE **80%** SALES **500K**

PLAYSTATION ALL-STARS BATTLE ROYALE

PLAYSTATION ALL-STARS BATTLE ROYALE

Long story short: it isn't as good as *Smash Bros*. But *PS All-Stars* is still a fun game with a varied cast, great when you've got some mates over and want to kick the crap out of them (virtually.) Only being able to really hurt people with super moves is infuriating, but one big mistake alone can't answer for the fact that the game has barely sold more than half a million units. Flawed but fun, and deserving of a few more sales.

PLAY SCORE **59%** SALES **550K**

SPEC OPS: THE LINE

No game conjured up more conversation last year than *Spec Ops: The Line*, a deconstruction of a typical army shooter with a narrative inspired by Conrad's *Heart Of Darkness*. Whether the game succeeds in conveying its message or fails due to adhering too strictly to the same genre tropes it aims to expose, no-one can fault the development team for the bravery of trying. *Spec Ops* sold less than a million units, and it's a damn shame. Give it a go.

PLAY SCORE **80%** SALES **1.3m**

SLEEPING DOGS

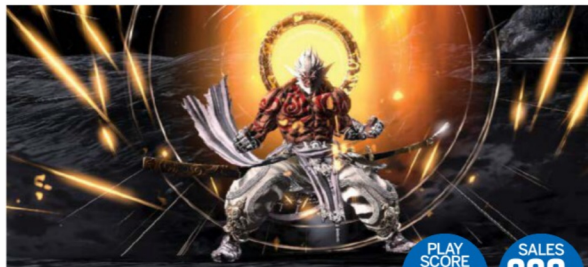
Sleeping Dogs was oozing with Hong Kong action cinema style, and great fun to boot. A total surprise; no one expected the game formally known as *True Crime: Hong Kong* to be anywhere near as good as it was, and subsequently nobody bought it. Thanks to some hasty price drops the game has shifted just over a million copies worldwide, but that leaves plenty of you yet to experience the adventure of Wei Shen. (Wei-heh! Ugh.)

PLAY SCORE **51%** SALES **900K**

WARHAMMER 40,000: SPACE MARINE

Space Marine was undoubtedly flawed, but was still one of the most faithful versions of the *40K* universe we've seen in a videogame. Combat was utterly brutal, with weapons like chainswords and power hammers rending thousands of orks into bloody pieces. Even the multiplayer was pretty good, allowing players to customise their own Space Marine with the same *Warhammer* paints you can buy in real life. As far as mindless, gory good times go, you can do far worse.

15 Underselling PS3 Games



ASURA'S WRATH

There are no games like *Asura's Wrath*, in many ways the closest we have ever come to playing one of the more brawly animes. Consisting of 95 per cent quick-time events with a bit of third-person brawling thrown in, it's super-linear and devoid of replay value, but as an experience there is little to equal it. There's a bit where you fight a guy the size of the planet, and punch him on the end of his finger so hard he EXPLODES. It didn't even sell half a million. Tragic.

PLAY
SCORE
67%

SALES
390K



BINARY DOMAIN

We expected another bog-standard third-person shooter, but *Binary Domain* was actually a uniquely tongue-in-cheek, well-made piece of schlocky fun that stood out just enough to get our attention. With a mad, *Terminator*-inspired plot and loads of cheesy dialogue, *Binary Domain* was the gaming equivalent of a bad Eighties action film, in all the right ways. It sold less than half a million worldwide and can be found now for mere pennies. Get on it.

PLAY
SCORE
70%

SALES
350K



ONE PIECE: PIRATE WARRIORS

Dynasty Warriors is a love-it or hate-it franchise, but the recent *One Piece* spin-off was the best effort from the series in years – a stylish, fun adaptation that gave fans of the manga loads to smile about. It did well in Japan, like every other *Dynasty Warriors* game, but sold pretty awfully in the West. Even if you aren't a fan of the series or the show, give it a try – the stylish graphics and fun brawling might win you over.

PLAY
SCORE
69%

SALES
1m

DMC DEVIL MAY CRY



PLAY
SCORE
93%

SALES
610K

The newest game on the list, and hopefully one we will be wrong about in time. *DmC* sold a third of the amount of *Devil May Cry 4* respectively in its first week of sale, despite being a far better game. New Dante is just as cool as the old one, the story is great with some hilarious dialogue, and the gameplay is true *Devil May Cry*, through and through. Hopefully *DmC* will be a steady seller in years to come. Buy it now!



PLAY
SCORE
94%

SALES
950K

XCOM: ENEMY UNKNOWN

Enemy Unknown was so bloody great that we picked it as our 2012 game of the year, yet it hasn't even sold a million copies worldwide. Part of this can be attributed to the poor distribution on release – a local Game store received about six copies for each platform. It's now much more readily available and simply must be bought. This is a proper gamer's game, hard as nails, relentlessly tense and superbly entertaining.

BEATING DMG ON DANTE MUST DIE



WEAPONS SET-UP

To begin with, your default weapons set-up should be Aquila, Eryx and Revenant. Aquila as it's easily the best weapon for crowd control. Use Round Trip to pin down enemies and Buy-In to pull them towards you. Quick trick – you can do two quick attacks in Rebellion, delay, then do an attack with Aquila to activate Buy-In.

Eryx is the straight up damage-dealer but it's a more useful air weapon than Arbiter – tapping Triangle in the air will allow you to bounce an enemy while slowly descending, which is useful if waiting for a danger below to pass like a charging chainsaw or primed grenade.

Slam is a good way of clearing some breathing space, thanks to its shockwave. You can also charge the punches to break through attacks that wouldn't otherwise connect, such as on Butchers.

Revenant is good mostly thanks to Fireworks, which works just as well as a normal Revenant shot but has the added bonus of hitting additional enemies. Revenant is also the best weapon to use against Demon Shards when they appear, another reason to always keep it ready.

The only other weapon to really consider is Osiris, as Prop Shredder is the best move to parry as it's the move with the most active frames, making it useful for reflecting projectiles. Arbiter is more useful against Hell Knights, as Tremor will pop them into the air and allow you to Angel Lift towards them for easy damage. Rebellion is good for mixing up your moves to keep your Style rank high and Roulette is a useful way to stay in the air (Angel Lift after the airborne enemy).



Beating DmC on Dante Must Die

ENEMIES

BATHOS, PATHOS, HARPY

Although they're not too painful to fight, make these enemies a priority, so you don't get hit by random grenades and spears while battling bigger threats. Use Demon Pull to draw them towards you and Rebellion to cut them down. If you are surrounded by enemies, use Demon Pull followed by Demon Kick (so they're stunned), then move away to create some space, and Demon Pull again. You can reflect their projectiles but it's not worth the hassle. More useful is Demon Pulling enemies towards thrown grenades but again, it's not really worth it.



GHOST & BLOOD RAGE

They're not too difficult individually but teamed up, these two become a real headache. Use Osiris and Round Trip to pin down Ghost Rage and then switch to Demon weapons to attack Blood Rage. As it takes longer to kill Ghost with Angel weapons, this is the most efficient way of clearing the combo. If they roar and gain transparency, they'll become invulnerable and will use a Sonic-style spin dash attack. Use audio cues to dodge these attacks – double-jumping is the easiest way to avoid them but if you can't (no room or you're about to land) then Angel Dodge a fraction after you hear the spin rev up. Eventually, they'll revert back to their vulnerable forms.



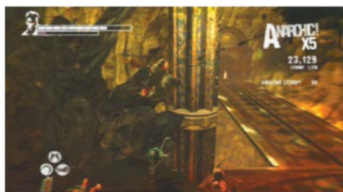
DREAMRUNNERS

Leave them until last if you can and keep your distance until some enemies have been killed. Gunfire works well at pinning them back, so make frequent use of Revenant's Fireworks in your attack patterns. Otherwise, there's a really, really easy way to deal with Dreamrunners. At distance, hold Eryx Charge. If the Dreamrunner closes the distance with normal attacks, cancel the charge with an evade. If he teleports, wait until he reappears and unleash the charged punch, then Angel Lift after his body and follow-up with a combo (which is another reason why it's good to kill the other enemies first – the automatic lock-on is guaranteed to focus on the teleporting Dreamrunner).



WITCH

Whenever a Witch is about, make her a high priority target. She's not too difficult to fight once you learn to avoid her projectiles but her ability to shield other enemies is annoying. The best way to kill her is to switch to Osiris. Not only does Prop Shredder eat through her shield but it's also the easiest way to reflect her swords back at her. And yes, for those thinking ahead, this trick works for the Vergil fight too.



STAYING IN THE AIR

You want to stay in the air as much as possible. When you're in the air you dramatically cut down the amount of moves that can hit you while remaining capable of doing damage. This is where you need to make smart use of Dante's Angel Lift, Demon Pull and Enemy Step moves to keep him up in the air for as long as possible. Use Angel Lift on enemies higher than Dante to bring him to their level, Demon Pull to bring fresh enemies up from the ground and Enemy Step to reset your moves available in the air (you can Enemy Step immediately after connecting with an aerial move, which is key to longer combos). Here are the 'main' aerial moves you'll need.

REBELLION – Roulette – Pops the enemies higher into the air. Can't be used when near the ground as the delay will see Dante fall too close to grounded enemies.

REBELLION – Helm Breaker – The quickest way to bring Dante to the ground and can be followed up by tapping Circle to almost

immediately relaunch. Good if you can't Demon Jump due to mismatched heights with your airborne enemy.

OSIRIS – Rake – Hits enemies higher into the air and will also scoop enemies up from the ground. Follow it with an Angel Lift. It's the easiest way to lift Dante higher when he's already airborne.

ERYX – Showdown – Bounces enemies off the floor to a certain height, regardless of where they're hit from. Dante can use this move to slow his descent while doing damage, useful if you're waiting for the ground situation to calm down.

AQUILA – Skirmish – It reaches incredibly far and slows Dante's descent significantly.

AQUILA – Calibur – The only move where Dante will move a significant horizontal distance when he's already airborne. Useful if you want to reposition Dante in the air.



PLAYING DEFENSIVE

There is no benefit to doing a raw evade, so get into the habit of doing Angel or Demon Evade. The attack bonus makes Demon Evade is more useful when the evade opportunity is easier to spot but Angel Evade is a better defensive move in certain situations, when the timing is more ambiguous, plus it travels much further. Here's a rough list:

ANGEL EVADE

- Bathos, Pathos bombs
- Ghost/Blood Rage spin attacks (if you can't jump)
- Vergil Swords
- Ravager Charge
- When completely surrounded

DEMON EVADE

- All Butcher attacks
- All Stygian attacks
- Tyrant leap attacks/swipes
- Immediately after Dreamrunner parries you
- Dreamrunner teleport (if you don't have a move charged)

PLAY PS3 PlayList

If you want to know what a game scored then these pages are for you

TEAM PICKS LEISURE TIME GAMES



top five SAM ROBERTS

- 1 Jak and Daxter HD Collection
- 2 Persona 4: Golden
- 3 Sly Cooper: Thieves In Time
- 4 Hitman Trilogy HD
- 5 Saints Row: The Third



top five ANDY SLATER

- 1 The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim
- 2 XCOM: Enemy Unknown
- 3 Hitman: Absolution
- 4 Dragon Age: Origins
- 5 The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion



top five REBECCA RICHARDS

- 1 Lego Lord Of The Rings
- 2 Breath Of Fire III
- 3 Final Fantasy VII
- 4 Grandia
- 5 Borderlands 2



top five SAM SMITH

- 1 DmC: Devil May Cry
- 2 Anarchy Reigns
- 3 Final Fantasy Tactics: War Of The Lions
- 4 Street Fighter 3rd Strike
- 5 Dead Space 3

PS3 LISTING

game	issue	score
007 Legends	225	44%
3D Collection	195	75%
3D Dot Game Heroes	192	87%
50 Cent: Blood On The Sand	177	70%
Ace Combat: Assault Horizon	211	78%
The Adventures Of Tintin	212	58%
Afro Samurai	177	61%
Agarest: Generations Of War	187	78%
Agarest: Generations Of War 2	223	43%
Agarest: Generations Of War Zero	209	52%
Air Conflicts: Secret Wars	208	58%
Alice: Madness Returns	207	57%
Aliens vs Predator	189	79%
Alone In The Dark	173	70%
Alpha Protocol	193	83%
Ape Escape	208	55%
Arcana Heart 3	207	79%
Armored Core For Answer	173	65%
Armored Core 4	153	67%
Armored Core V	217	60%
Army Of Two: The 40th Day	188	65%
Ar Tonelico Qogs: Knell Of Ar Ciel	203	27%
Ashes Cricket 2009	183	30%
Assassin's Creed	161	58%
Assassin's Creed II	186	89%
Assassin's Creed III	225	78%
Assassin's Creed: Brotherhood	199	91%
More than enough additions to take the Assassin's Creed formula into modern classic territory.		
Assassin's Creed Revelations	212	75%
Asura's Wrath	216	67%
Atelier Rorona: The Alchemist Of Arland	198	77%
Backbreaker	193	70%
Band Hero	187	68%
Batman: Arkham Asylum	183	85%
Batman: Arkham City	211	94%
Rocksteady's sequel to the excellent Arkham Asylum is a serious contender for game of the year.		
Battle Fantasia	176	67%
Battlefield: Bad Company	168	78%
Battlefield: Bad Company 2	190	93%
Battlefield 3	212	88%
BattleShip	219	44%
Bayonetta*	187	93%
The Beatles: Rock Band	184	96%
Beijing 2008	168	54%
Beowulf	161	61%
Binary Domain	216	70%
Bionic Commando	179	82%
BioShock	172	93%
BioShock 2	189	88%
Birds Of Steel	217	55%
BlackSite	163	43%
Bladestorm: The Hundred Years' War	160	58%
BlazBlue: Calamity Trigger	190	85%
BlazBlue: Continuum Shift	198	94%
Blazing Angels	151	54%
Bleach: Soul Resurrección	209	63%
Blitz: The League II	172	67%
Blur	193	86%
Bodycount	210	54%
Borderlands	185	80%
Borderlands 2	223	90%
is an excellent lesson in sequel-making and is easily one of 2012's best games.		
The Bourne Conspiracy	168	72%

game	issue	score
Brink	206	67%
Brothers In Arms: Hell's Highway	171	75%
Brütal Legend	185	79%
Bulletstorm	203	86%
Burnout Paradise	162	74%
Buzz!: Quiz TV	168	82%
Buzz! Quiz World	185	70%
Call Of Duty 3	151	77%
Call Of Duty: World At War	173	68%
Call Of Duty 4: Modern Warfare	160	88%
Call Of Duty: Modern Warfare 2	186	94%
Call Of Duty: Modern Warfare 3	212	88%
Call Of Duty: Black Ops	199	94%
Treyarch's first genuinely brilliant entry to the series and a standard-bearer for fast-paced online shooters.		
Call Of Duty: Black Ops II	226	80%
Call Of Juarez: Bound In Blood	181	85%
Call Of Juarez: The Cartel	208	30%
Captain America: Super Soldier	208	70%
Castlevania: Lords Of Shadow	197	85%
Carnival Island	213	53%
Cars 2	208	68%
Catherine	215	61%
Champion Jockey	210	50%
Chronicles Of Rickick: Assault On Dark Athena	178	87%
Child Of Eden	211	80%
Civilization Revolution	168	90%
Clash Of The Titans	193	65%
Clive Barker's Jericho	159	84%
The Club	163	80%
Colin McRae: DIRT	158	91%
Colin McRae: DIRT 2	184	87%
Command & Conquer: Red Alert 3	178	65%
Conan	160	71%
Condemned 2	165	78%
Conflict: Denied Ops	164	50%
Cross Time 4: The Syndicate	218	37%
Create	199	71%
Cross Edge	182	59%
Crysis 2	204	72%
The Cursed Crusade	211	40%
Damnation	181	38%
Damage Inc: Pacific Squadron WWII	223	37%
Dance Dance Revolution	201	52%
Dante's Inferno	189	80%
The Darkness	154	91%
The Darkness II	215	76%
Dark Sector	165	62%
Dark Souls	211	90%
Sequel to one of the hardest games in recent times, Dark Souls is another superb release from developer From Software.		
Dark Void	188	81%
Darksiders	188	83%
Darksiders II	221	86%
DC Universe Online	202	80%
de Blob 2	203	65%
Dead Or Alive 5	223	78%
Dead Island	210	79%
Dead Rising 2	197	78%
Dead Rising 2: Off The Record	211	61%
Dead Space	172	87%
Dead Space 2	201	92%
The point where the Dead Space series stepped up and became something to be genuinely excited about.		
Dead Space 3	228	70%
Dead To Rights: Retribution	192	68%
Def Jam: Icon	151	79%
Def Jam Rapstar	199	72%
Demon's Souls	193	92%
Destroy All Humans: Path Of The Fury	178	29%
Deus Ex: Human Revolution	209	91%
Devil May Cry 4	163	89%
Devil May Cry HD Collection	217	80%
DIRT 3	206	85%
DIRT Showdown	219	84%

game	issue	score
Disgaea 3: Absence Of Justice	175	81%
Dishonored	224	92%
Stealth has never been so satisfying as it is in Dishonored. One of 2012's finest. Do the game a favour and play it sneaky.		
DJ Hero	186	91%
DJ Hero 2	198	88%
Doctor Who: The Eternity Clock	220	32%
Doom 3: BFG Edition	225	69%
DmC: Devil May Cry	227	93%
DmC injects new life into one of the best games in all of gaming, and does so with a style and confidence that elevates it beyond its roots.		
Dragon Age: Origins	186	82%
Dragon Age II	203	86%
Dragon Ball: Raging Blast	186	40%
Dragon Ball Z: Burst Limit	168	61%
Dragon's Dogma	218	48%
Driver: San Francisco	209	68%
Duke Nukem Forever	207	33%
Dungeon Siege III	206	80%
Dynasty Warriors: Gundam	160	40%
Dynasty Warriors: Gundam 2	176	43%
Dynasty Warriors: Gundam 3	208	56%
Dynasty Warriors: Strikeforce	189	37%
Dynasty Warriors 6	164	30%
Dynasty Warriors 6: Empires	181	44%
Dynasty Warriors 7	204	32%
EA Sports Active 2	200	81%
EA Sports Grand Slam Tennis	215	75%
EA Sports MMA	198	89%
Eat Lead	178	38%
EDP: Insect Armageddon	208	64%
The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion	152	91%
The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim	212	93%
WARNING: The latest addition to Bethesda's superb franchise will seriously damage your social life.		
El Shaddai: Ascension Of The Metatron	208	77%
Enchanted Arms	152	69%
Enemy Territory: Quake Wars	168	60%
Enslaved: Odyssey To The West	197	83%
Epic Mickey 2: The Power Of Two	226	55%
Eternal Sonata	176	87%
Everybody's Golf 5*	158	88%
Everybody's Golf: World Tour	165	91%
Eye Of Judgment	159	65%
EyePet	185	83%
EyePet: Move	197	84%
F1 2010	197	86%
F1 2011	211	71%
F1 2012	223	79%
F1 Race Stars	226	61%
FaceBreaker	170	55%
Fairytale Fights	186	51%
Fallout 3	173	97%
Fallout 3 lives up to its promise and then some. It's a damning portrayal of the consequences of war, and a compelling RPG experience.		
Fallout: New Vegas	198	88%
Family Guy: Back To The Multiverse	227	40%
Fantastic Four: Rise Of The Silver Surfer	155	39%
Far Cry 2	172	74%
Far Cry 3	226	88%
F.E.A.R.	151	81%
F.E.A.R. 2: Project Origin	176	87%
F.E.A.R. 3	208	60%
FIFA 08	159	84%
FIFA 09	171	87%
FIFA 10	184	90%
FIFA 11	197	91%
FIFA 12	210	86%
FIFA 13	223	82%
FIFA Street (2012)	217	74%
FIFA Street 3	163	66%
FIFA World Cup 2010	192	70%
The Fight	199	42%
Fight Night Champion	203	88%

This month's new entries

The newest games, freshly squeezed among all your old favourites

Metal Gear Rising: Revengeance	PS3	91%
Dead Space 3	PS3	70%
Persona 4: Golden	VITA	94%
Retro City Rampage	PSN	78%

TOP TEN STORY-DRIVEN GAMES



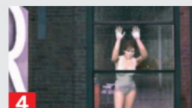
1 Red Dead Redemption



2 Mass Effect 2



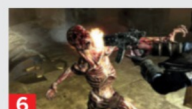
3 Uncharted 2: Among Thieves



4 Heavy Rain



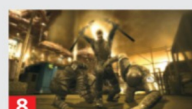
5 Portal 2



6 Need for Speed: Most Wanted



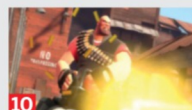
7 LA Noire



8 Deus Ex: Human Revolution



9 GTA IV: The Lost and Damned



10 The Orange Box

game	issue	score
Fight Night Round 3	151	87%
Fight Night Round 4	181	84%
Final Fantasy XIII	190	85%
Final Fantasy XIII-2	214	80%
Fist Of The North Star: Ken's Rage	198	51%
Folklore	158	66%
Formula One Championship Edition	151	72%
Fracture	171	72%
Front Mission Evolved	198	52%
Fuel	180	49%
Full Auto 2: Battlines	151	69%
G-Force	183	59%
Game Of Thrones	220	39%
Genji: Days Of The Blade	151	38%
Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter 2	157	83%
Ghost Recon Future Soldier	219	60%
Ghostbusters: The Videogame	180	80%
GI Joe	183	22%
The Godfather	151	37%
The Godfather II	178	38%
God Of War III	190	88%
God Of War Collection*	188	93%

Two of the greatest PS2 action games of all time come together at a bargain price. Essential purchase.

God Of War Collection: Volume II	210	70%
The Golden Compass	162	32%
GoldenEye 007: Reloaded	213	63%
Gran Turismo 5	200	85%
Gran Turismo 5 Prologue	165	75%
Grand Theft Auto IV	164	98%
Hard Day: Rock Band	194	77%
GTA: Episodes From Liberty City	191	94%
Guitar Hero III	160	90%
Guitar Hero 5	184	81%
Guitar Hero: Aerosmith	168	63%
Guitar Hero Greatest Hits	182	76%
Guitar Hero Metallica	179	88%
Guitar Hero: Van Halen	189	65%
Guitar Hero: Warriors Of Rock	197	71%
Guitar Hero World Tour	173	95%
Harry Potter And The Deathly Hallows: Part 1	200	21%
Harry Potter And The Deathly Hallows: Part 2	208	37%
Harry Potter And The Half-Blood Prince	182	60%
Harry Potter And The Order Of The Phoenix	155	32%
Haze	167	64%
Heavenly Sword	157	71%
Heavy Rain	189	94%
Heavy Rain: Move Edition	198	70%
Heroes Over Europe	184	48%
Hitman: Absolution	225	93%

It's still a bit rough around some edges, but there's no denying the scope, intelligence and passion poured into Hitman: Absolution.

Homefront	203	69%
The House Of The Dead: Overkill	212	75%
Hunted: The Demon's Forge	207	59%
Hyperdimension Neptunia	202	21%
Ice Age 3: Dawn Of The Dinosaurs	182	47%
Ice Age 4: Continental Drift: Arctic Games	222	40%
Ico & Shadow Of The Colossus Classics HD	210	94%

Largely ignored when they were first released, gamers can now enjoy these wonderful games in brilliant HD.

IL-2 Sturmovik: Birds Of Prey	183	72%
The Incredible Hulk	168	52%
Infamous	180	81%
Infamous 2	207	83%
International Cricket 2010	194	61%
Inversion	220	49%
Iron Man	166	58%
Iron Man 2	193	50%
The Jak And Daxter Trilogy	216	82%
Jak And Daxter: The Lost Frontier	187	59%
James Bond 007: Blood Stone	199	63%
James Cameron's Avatar: The Game	187	64%
JASF: Jane's Advanced Strike Fighters	217	30%
John Daly's ProStroke Golf	197	70%

Juiced 2: Hot Import Nights	159	78%
Just Cause 2	190	87%
Kane & Lynch: Dead Men	160	73%
Kane & Lynch 2: Dog Days	196	71%
Kataman Forever	184	88%
Killzone 2	176	93%
Killzone 3	202	80%
Kingdoms Of Amalur: Reckoning	215	70%
The King Of Fighters XII	182	82%
The King Of Fighters XIII	213	76%
Knight's Contract	202	53%
Kung Fu Panda 2	207	20%
Kung Fu Rider	196	65%
Lair	158	52%
LA Noire	206	91%

Not perfect but Rockstar's new IP introduces pioneering facial-capture technology and interesting gameplay.

Last Rebellion	191	42%
Legend Of Spyro: Dawn Of The Dragon	174	54%
Legendary	173	62%
Lego Batman	173	65%
Lego Batman 2	221	80%
Lego Harry Potter: Years 1-4	194	79%
Lego Harry Potter: Years 5-7	213	67%
Lego Indiana Jones: The Original Adventures	167	73%
Lego Indiana Jones 2: The Adventure Continues	187	71%
Lego Pirates Of The Caribbean	206	76%
Lego Rock Band	187	75%
Lego Star Wars: The Complete Saga	160	76%
Lego Star Wars III: The Clone Wars	204	79%
Lego: The Lord Of The Rings	227	85%
Leisure Suit Larry: Box Office Bust	180	24%
LittleBigPlanet	172	94%
LittleBigPlanet 2	201	96%

An amazing game and something to get involved with even if you can't create your own stuff.

LittleBigPlanet: Karting	225	85%
Lollipop Chainsaw	221	72%
London 2012	221	45%
The Lord Of The Rings: Aragorn's Quest	199	60%
The Lord Of The Rings: Conquest	175	52%
The Lord Of The Rings: War In The North	213	42%
Lost Planet 2	192	75%
Lost Planet: Extreme Condition	163	69%
Lost: The Video Game	164	38%
Madagascar 3	224	39%
Madden NFL 07	151	82%
Madden NFL 08	157	82%
Madden NFL 09	170	83%
Madden NFL 10	184	82%
Madden NFL 11	196	84%
Madden NFL 12	209	85%
Madden NFL 13	223	86%
Mafia II	196	81%
MAG	189	68%
Majin And The Forsaken Kingdom	199	72%
Marvel vs Capcom 3	202	88%
Marvel Ultimate Alliance	151	64%
Marvel Ultimate Alliance 2	185	57%
Max Anarchy (Import)	223	70%
Max Payne 3	219	77%
Mass Effect 2	201	97%
Mass Effect 3	216	93%

Despite having an arguably disappointing ending, this BioWare RPG is still a must for any serious collection.

Medal Of Honor	198	86%
Medal Of Honor Airborne	161	85%
Medal Of Honor: Warfighter	225	72%
Medieval Moves	213	47%
Mercenaries 2: World In Flames	171	78%
Metal Gear Rising: Revengeance	228	91%
Metal Gear Solid 4	167	92%

Metal Gear Rising: Revengeance is another world-class entry in gaming's most fundamentally playable genre.

Metal Gear Solid HD Collection	214	91%
Mobile Suit Gundam: Crossfire	151	37%
Michael Jackson: The Experience	205	58%
Midnight Club: Los Angeles	173	84%
Mindjack	202	38%
Mini Ninjas	184	80%
Mirror's Edge	173	71%
ModNation Racers	192	90%
Monster Madness	170	78%
Mortal Kombat	205	81%
Mortal Kombat vs DC Universe	173	68%
MotoGP 08	172	65%
MotoGP 09/10	190	77%
MotoGP 10/11	204	64%
MotorStorm	151	92%
MotorStorm: Apocalypse	203	76%
MotorStorm: Pacific Rift	172	93%
Mud: FIM Motocross Championship	217	50%
MX vs ATV: Alive	206	42%
MX vs ATV Reflex	189	68%
MX vs ATV Untamed	164	58%
naïf	201	61%
Naruto: Ultimate Ninja Storm	174	59%
Naruto Shippuden: Ultimate Ninja Storm Generations	217	53%
NASCAR 08	157	38%
Naughty Bear	195	64%
NBA 07	153	33%
NBA 2K7	151	76%
NBA 2K8	172	71%
NBA 2K10	186	79%
NBA 2K11	199	82%
NBA 2K12	211	88%
NBA 2K13	224	88%
NBA Jam	200	68%
NBA Live 08	158	59%
NBA Live 09	170	81%
NBA Street: Homecourt	151	68%
Need For Speed Carbon	151	76%
Need For Speed: Hot Pursuit	199	91%
Need For Speed: Most Wanted	225	95%

Need For Speed: Most Wanted is easily the best arcade racer of this generation. We absolutely love it.

Need For Speed ProStreet	161	86%
Need For Speed Shift	184	81%
Need For Speed: The Run	213	63%
Need For Speed: Undercover	173	75%
NeverDead	215	39%
Nier	192	54%
Ni No Kuni: Wrath Of The White Witch	227	85%
NHL 2K7	151	80%
NHL 2K9	172	67%
NHL 2K10	186	70%
NHL 09	170	88%
NHL 10	184	85%
NHL 11	198	89%
NHL 12	210	78%
NHL 13	223	74%
Ninja Gaiden Sigma	154	88%
Ninja Gaiden Sigma 2	184	82%
Ninja Gaiden 3	217	63%
No More Heroes: Heroes' Paradise	206	89%
One Piece: Pirate Warriors	224	69%
Operation Flashpoint: Dragon Rising	185	78%
Operation Flashpoint: Red River	205	75%
The Orange Box	161	93%
Overlord: Raising Hell	167	65%
Overlord II	181	68%
Pain	183	69%
PES 2008	159	70%
PES 2009	172	80%
PES 2010	185	72%
PES 2011	197	73%
PES 2012	210	74%
Phineas & Ferb: Across The 2nd Dimension	211	66%
PixelJunk Racers	160	74%
PlayStation All-Stars Battle Royale	225	80%
PlayStation Move Heroes	204	54%

*denotes import review

SEQUELS YOU MAY HAVE FORGOTTEN



BIOSHOCK 2

A lot of people said *BioShock* didn't need a sequel, and fair enough – when does anything actually need a sequel? In an ideal world, things wouldn't be that money-driven. Nevertheless, the *BioShock 2* team put together a tale that was more consistent and at times superior in storytelling.



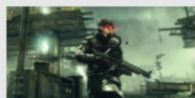
ASSASSIN'S CREED: BROTHERHOOD

Now barely talked about, *Brotherhood* cleaned up the formula of *Assassin's Creed II*, even if the truncated world was never as impressive. Renovating Rome was rather fun, too, even if everyone soured on the Ezio trilogy in the end.



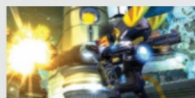
CALL OF JUAREZ: BOUND IN BLOOD

Before shooting itself in the foot with the rubbish *Call Of Juarez: The Cartel*, this series presented the best pre-*Red Dead* rendition of the Wild West that we'd seen on PlayStation 3 at that point. It's still a solid shooter, though, with some pleasingly silly Wild West touches.



KILLZONE 2

Killzone 2 is actually one of the best shooters of the generation – it's just the vaguely nu-metal-style and generic art direction that puts people off, despite an incredible multiplayer mode and sharp, tactical FPS mechanics that make a cover system work in this genre.



RATCHET & CLANK: A CRACK IN TIME

Structurally, this was definitely the most interesting of the perennially samey *Ratchet* games, since you could click about on an open world spaceship map. It's been overexposed on PlayStation, now – bit of a shame, really.

game	issue	score
POTC: At World's End	154	48%
Port Royale 3: Pirates & Merchants	224	54%
Portal 2	205	95%
Another exceptional realisation from Valve, gamers are going to be talking about <i>Portal 2</i> for a long time to come.		
Prince Of Persia	174	83%
Prince Of Persia: The Forgotten Sands	193	68%
Prince Of Persia Trilogy	200	88%
Prison Break: The Conspiracy	191	40%
Prototype	181	76%
Prototype 2	219	75%
Puma After Hours Athletics	214	58%
Pure	171	80%
Pure Football	194	69%
Quantum Of Solace	175	57%
Quantum Theory	197	29%
Race Driver: GRID	167	85%
Ratchet & Clank: Q-Force	227	52%
Racket Sports	198	37%
Rage	211	60%
Rainbow Six Vegas	155	88%
Rainbow Six Vegas 2	164	78%
Rango	203	54%
Ratchet & Clank: A Crack in Time	186	82%
Ratchet & Clank: All 4 One	211	68%
Ratchet & Clank: Tools Of Destruction	160	72%
Ratchet & Clank Trilogy HD	221	88%
Rayman Origins	212	80%
Red Dead Redemption	193	92%
Relocates the familiar GTA formula to a superbly realised new setting and, in many ways, is unlike anything else as a result.		
Red Dead Redemption: Undead Nightmare	199	87%
Red Faction: Armageddon	207	62%
Red Faction: Guerrilla	180	80%
Resident Evil: Operation Raccoon City	217	33%
Resident Evil 5	177	86%
Resident Evil 5: Gold Edition	190	86%
Resident Evil 6	223	88%
Resistance: Fall Of Man	151	83%
Resistance 2	173	90%
With its impressive set-pieces and glorious multiplayer mode, <i>Resistance 2</i> is one of the best FPSs on the PS3.		
Resistance 3	210	88%
Resonance Of Fate	191	79%
Ridge Racer 7	151	75%
Ridge Racer Unbounded	217	67%
Rise Of The Argonauts	176	58%
Risen 2: Dark Waters	222	64%
Rock Band	169	94%
Rock Band 2	179	96%
Rock Band 3	199	84%
Rocksmith	223	78%
Rogue Warrior	188	09%
Rugby World Cup 2011	209	49%
Rune Factory Oceans	220	51%
R.U.S.E.	197	82%
The Saboteur	187	67%
Sacred 2: Fallen Angel	180	76%
Saints Row 2	172	79%
Saints Row: The Third	211	88%
SBK Generators	220	51%
Saint Selya: Sanctuary Battle	216	52%
Saw	186	52%
Saw II: Flesh & Blood	198	36%
Sega Mega Drive Ultimate Collection	177	85%
SBK 08	172	55%
SBK 2011	206	70%
SBK Generators	220	54%
SBK X: Superbike World Championship	193	67%
Sega Rally	158	92%
Sengoku Basara: Samurai Heroes	198	76%
Shadows Of The Damned	207	79%
Shaun White Skateboarding	198	70%
Shaun White Snowboarding	173	72%
Shellshock 2: Blood Trails	177	32%
Shift 2: Unleashed	204	66%
The Shoot	199	76%
Silent Hill: Downpour	217	81%
Silent Hill HD Collection	217	76%
Silent Hill: Homecoming	174	64%
The Simpsons Game	160	82%
The Sims 3	199	87%
The Sims 3: Pets	212	70%
SingStar	159	80%
SingStar Guitar	199	70%



game	issue	score
SingStar Pop Edition	179	81%
Singularity	195	80%
Skate	159	86%
Skate 2	175	82%
Skate 3	192	86%
Sleeping Dogs	222	80%
The Sly Collection	200	84%
Sniper Elite V2	218	52%
Sniper: Ghost Warrior	206	45%
SOCOM: Special Forces	205	63%
Sonic & Sega All-Stars Racing	190	78%
Sonic & All-Stars Racing Transformed	227	88%
Sonic Generations	212	70%
Sonic The Hedgehog	151	52%
Sonic Unleashed	175	48%
Sorcery	219	76%
SoulCalibur IV	169	94%
SoulCalibur V	214	80%
Spec Ops: The Line	220	59%
Spider-Man 3	155	33%
Spider-Man: Edge Of Time	212	38%
Spider-Man: Shattered Dimensions	197	69%
Spider-Man: Web Of Shadows	173	55%
Splatterhouse	200	58%
Splinter Cell Double Agent	153	79%
Split/Second: Velocity	192	90%
Just beating <i>Blur</i> to the chequered flag, <i>Split/Second</i> is a wonderfully intense racing game in the Burnout mould.		
Sports Champions	196	83%
Sports Champions 2	225	65%
SSX	216	45%
Starhawk	219	81%
Star Ocean: The Last Hope International	190	63%
Star Wars: The Force Unleashed	171	65%
Star Wars: The Force Unleashed II	199	61%
Start The Party!	196	72%
Stormrise	178	51%
Stranglehold	159	65%
Street Fighter IV	176	95%
Street Fighter X Tekken	217	83%
Super Street Fighter IV: Arcade Edition	207	88%
Stuntman: Ignition	157	82%
SuperCar Challenge	183	66%
Superstars V8: Next Challenge	190	55%
Superstars V8 Racing	181	63%
Super Street Fighter IV	191	90%
Supremacy MMA	211	40%
Syndicate	216	78%
Tales Of Graces f	222	77%
Tekken 6	184	94%
There are flaws that hurt the experience, but nothing, nothing, stops <i>Tekken 6</i> from being an intense, tactical and brilliant fighting game.		
Tekken Hybrid	213	79%
Tekken Tag Tournament 2	223	90%
Far from being the sideshow attraction the word 'spin-off' might suggest, <i>Tekken Tag Tournament 2</i> is actually pretty damn brilliant.		
Test Drive Ferrari Racing Legends	221	60%
Test Drive Unlimited 2	203	62%
The Amazing Spider-Man	221	61%
The Testament Of Sherlock Holmes	224	55%
Thor: God Of Thunder	206	38%
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 07	151	88%
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 08	158	73%
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 09	171	86%
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 10	181	69%
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 11	194	60%
Tiger Woods PGA 12: The Masters	204	65%
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 13	217	70%
Time Crisis 4	166	69%
Time Crisis: Razing Storm	199	58%
TimeShift	162	72%
TNA Impact!	171	71%
Tom Clancy's EndWar	173	80%
Tom Clancy's H.A.W.X.	177	75%
Tom Clancy's H.A.W.X. 2	196	69%
Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell Trilogy HD	210	78%
Tomb Raider Trilogy	204	86%
Tomb Raider: Underworld	173	83%
Tommy Hawk's Project 8	151	85%
Tony Hawk's Proving Ground	160	72%
Tony Hawk: Ride	188	52%
Top Gun: Hard Lock	218	45%
Top Spin 3	168	71%
Top Spin 4	203	60%
Tornado Outbreak	186	56%

game	issue	score
Toy Story 3	195	82%
Transformers: Dark Of The Moon	208	64%
Transformers: Fall Of Cybertron	223	73%
Transformers: Revenge Of The Fallen	182	41%
Transformers: The Game	156	34%
Transformers: War For Cybertron	194	80%
Trinity: Souls Of Zill Olli	202	56%
Trinity Universe	194	61%
Tron Evolution	200	17%
Turning Point: Fall Of Liberty	165	40%
Turok	163	46%
TV Superstars	199	53%
Twisted Metal	216	68%
Two Worlds II	203	64%
UEFA Euro 2008	165	62%
UFC Undisputed 2009	180	90%
UFC Undisputed 2010	193	88%
UFC Undisputed 3	215	82%
Ultimate Marvel vs Capcom 3	212	78%
Uncharted: Drake's Fortune	161	87%
Uncharted 2: Among Thieves	185	96%
Uncharted 3: Drake's Deception	212	90%
Fans of the series won't be disappointed as Drake returns with some exceptional set pieces and superb action.		
Unreal Tournament III	162	88%
Untold Legends: Dark Kingdom	151	54%
Valkyria Chronicles	173	82%
Vancouver 2010	189	76%
Vanquish	197	93%
A brilliant surprise from the developer of <i>Bayonetta</i> and easily one of the best games we've played in 2010.		
Viking: Battle For Asgard	165	74%
Virtua Fighter 5	151	83%
Virtua Tennis 2009	180	80%
Virtua Tennis 3	150	91%
Virtua Tennis 4	205	79%
Wanted: Weapons Of Fate	179	63%
Warhammer 40,000: Space Marine	210	51%
Warhawk	157	84%
Warriors: Legends Of Troy	202	14%
Warriors Orochi 3	217	59%
Watchmen: The End Is Nigh	183	55%
Way Of The Samurai 3	190	16%
Wet	184	41%
Wheelman	178	72%
Where The Wild Things Are	188	56%
White Knight Chronicles	190	55%
White Knight Chronicles II	207	49%
Wolfenstein	183	72%
Wonderbook: Book Of Spells	226	80%
World Snooker Championship 2007	151	56%
Worms Collection	224	85%
WRC: FIA World Rally Championship	197	76%
WRC 2: FIA World Rally Championship	211	63%
WRC 3 FIA World Rally Championship	225	75%
WRC REAL 09: World Snooker Championship	177	67%
WRC Real II	204	69%
WWE All Stars	204	82%
WWE Legends Of WrestleMania	178	80%
WWE SmackDown vs Raw 2008	159	88%
WWE SmackDown vs Raw 2009	173	74%
WWE SmackDown vs Raw 2010	185	77%
WWE SmackDown vs Raw 2011	199	63%
WWE 12	212	50%
WWE 13	225	55%
X-Blades	178	54%
XCOM: Enemy Unknown	224	94%
Thinking, planning, failing and dying is back in fashion. <i>XCOM</i> is a phenomenal remaking of a classic title and an instant classic in its own right.		
X-Men Destiny	211	35%
X-Men Origins: Wolverine	179	71%
Yakuza: Dead Souls	216	60%
Yakuza 3	191	80%
Yakuza 4	203	79%
Yostar 2: In The Movies	204	60%
Zone Of The Enders HD Collection	226	81%

PS VITA LISTING




A-Men	217	70%
Army Corps Of Hell	217	64%
Assassin's Creed III: Liberation	225	76%
Everybody's Golf	215	86%

game	issue	score
BlazBlue: Continuum Shift Extend	216	85%
Call Of Duty: Black Ops Declassified	227	18%
Escape Plan	216	81%
FIFA Football	216	80%
Gravity Rush	219	86%
Hustle Kings	216	81%
LittleBigPlanet	223	93%
 If the community is up to the task, LBP Vita's create mode has massive amounts of potential.		
Little Deviants	215	69%
Lumines Electric Symphony	216	85%
MGS HD Collection	221	70%
ModNation Racers: Road Trip	215	59%
Mortal Kombat	219	83%
MotorStorm RC	217	81%
New Little King's Story	224	70%
Ninja Gaiden Sigma Plus	217	72%
PlayStation All-Stars Battle Royale	225	80%
Persona 4: Golden	228	94%
 Persona 4: Golden is one of the best RPGs around, with great characterisation, a gripping story and smart combat mechanics.		
Puddle	222	82%
Rayman Origins	216	84%
Reality Fighters	215	52%
Resistance: Burning Skies	219	54%
Ridge Racer	216	48%
Silent Hill: Book Of Memories	225	32%
Sound Shapes	223	88%
Super Monkey Ball: Banana Splitz	224	78%
Super Stardust Delta	216	84%
Touch My Katamari	216	83%
Ultimate Marvel vs Capcom 3	216	80%
Uncharted: Golden Abyss	215	83%
Unit 13	216	67%
Virtua Tennis 4: World Tour Edition	215	81%
Virtue's Last Reward	227	84%
WipEout 2048	215	87%

PS STORE LISTING





1942: Joint Strike	170	74%
3-On-3 NHL Arcade	177	62%
After Burner Climax	193	91%
Age Of Booty	172	81%
Alien Breed: Impact	196	80%
Alien Breed 2: Assault	201	82%
Alien Breed 3: Descent	204	61%
All Zombies Must Die!	214	64%
Army	215	19%
Anarchy: Rush Hour	194	73%
Aqua Panic	193	68%
Arc The Lad	215	79%
Armageddon Riders	207	65%
Atelier Meruru: The Apprentice Of Arland	221	35%
Back To The Future: It's About Time	204	77%
The Backroom	210	72%
Battlefield 1943	182	89%
Beat Hazard Ultra	213	79%
Beat Slicer	201	85%
Beyond Good & Evil HD	207	86%
Bishi Bashi Special	175	61%
Bionic Commando Rearmed	169	88%
Bionic Commando Rearmed 2	203	61%
Blacklight: Tango Down	200	64%
Blade Kitten	197	72%
Blast Factor	152	72%
Blockus	202	54%
BlodRayne: Betrayal	211	62%
Blue Toad Murder Files: The Mysteries Of Little Riddle Episode I	188	65%
Blue Toad Murder Files: The Mysteries Of Little Riddle Episode II	188	61%
Blue Toad Murder Files: Episodes 4/5/6	193	70%
Bombberman Ultra	185	82%
Braid	188	93%
 We had to wait quite a while, but time is what we have plenty of both with and for Braid. Simply brilliant.		
Burn Zombie Burn	178	85%
Burnout Crash	211	79%
Call Of Duty Classic	188	90%
Calling All Cars	155	81%
Castle Crashers	200	88%
Castlevania: Harmony Of Despair	212	67%

game	issue	score
Catan	195	85%
Chime Super Deluxe	203	80%
Comet Crash	186	84%
Comix Zone	210	62%
Command & Conquer: Red Alert	16	79%
Command & Conquer Red Alert: Retaliation	176	55%
Command & Conquer: Red Alert 3	168	70%
Commander's Challenge	185	68%
Command & Conquer	175	44%
Cool Boarders	173	57%
Cool Boarders 2	175	31%
Costume Quest	199	70%
Counter-Strike: Global Offensive	223	89%
Crash Bandicoot	172	77%
Crash Bandicoot 3: Warped	174	82%
Crash Commando	174	80%
Crash Team Racing	170	79%
Crazy Machines Elements	210	71%
Crazy Taxi	200	80%
Crescent Pale Mist	200	70%
Critter Crunch	188	91%
Crystal Defenders	184	48%
Cubix HD	207	76%
Dark Mist	164	53%
Dead Nation	201	86%
Dead Space: Extraction	203	88%
Dead Space: Ignition	199	47%
DeathSpank	195	83%
Derrick The Deathfin	227	79%
Destruction Derby	01	80%
.detuned	186	50%
Deus Ex	219	83%
Digger HD	186	52%
Diner Dash	190	66%
Double Dragon Neon	224	37%
Driver	171	90%
Droplitz	184	91%
Earthworm Jim HD	196	89%
Eat Them!	202	60%
echochrome	169	85%
echochrome II	202	83%
Elefunk	170	45%
Eufhoria	212	85%
Explodemon	203	70%
Fat Princess	183	65%
Fatal Inertia EX	168	65%
FIFA 09 Ultimate Team	178	61%
Final Fight: Double Impact	193	90%
Final Fantasy VII	181	96%
Final Fantasy VIII	190	90%
Final Fantasy IX	195	90%
Fight Control HD	198	85%
Flock!	179	70%
flow	151	90%
Flower	176	85%
Frogger: Hyper Arcade Edition	221	55%
Frogger Returns	190	35%
From Dust	211	82%
Funky Lab Rat	201	70%
G-Police	27	84%
Galaxy Fight	215	27%
Gating Gears	207	62%
Geon	175	71%
Go! Puzzle	152	58%
God Hand	216	83%
Gotham City Impostors	216	78%
Grand Theft Auto III	224	90%

GTA III shuffles onto the slowly growing list of PSN classics, and still illustrates why Rockstar's original 3D take on the series was so influential.

Gran Turismo HD	150	75%
Gravity Crash	187	85%
Greed Corp	191	75%
Greg Hastings Paintball 2	219	22%
GTL Club+	174	72%
Guardians Of Middle-Earth	227	71%
Gundemonium Collection	197	80%
Gunshtar Heroes	181	85%
Hamstercore	194	72%
Hardcore 4x4	15	81%
Hasbro Family Game Night	187	60%
Heavy Weapon	187	75%
High Velocity Bowling	163	50%
Hi-Octane	178	64%
The House Of The Dead 4	218	82%
Hustle Kings	190	87%
Hyperballoid HD	188	70%
I Am Alive	217	64%

game	issue	score
inFamous Collection	224	85%
inFamous: Festival Of Blood	212	76%
Inferno Pool	181	81%
International Track & Field	171	80%
Interpol: The Trail Of Doctor Chaos	185	48%
Invincible Tiger: The Legend Of Han Tao	185	70%
Jet Rider 2	176	71%
Joe Danger	194	96%
Journey	216	87%
Judge Dredd	18	19%
Jumping Flash	172	55%
Jurassic Park: The Game	214	32%
Kick-Ass The Game	194	60%
Killzone HD	225	65%
Kula World	172	71%
Kung-Fu Live	201	42%
Landit Bandit	195	66%
Lara Croft And The Guardian Of Light	198	90%
The Last Guy	171	91%
Lead & Gold: Gangs Of The Wild West	193	65%
Lemmings	151	79%
Limbo	209	90%
Linger In Shadows	173	69%
LocoRoco Cocoreccho!	159	80%
Lumines Supernova	178	90%
Madden NFL Arcade	188	58%
Mad Riders	220	70%
Magic Carpet	179	65%
Magic: The Gathering: Duels Of The Planeswalkers	202	84%
Magic: The Gathering: Duels Of The Planeswalkers 2012	208	70%
Marvel vs Capcom 2	182	90%
Matt Hazard: Blood Bath And Beyond	189	69%
Medal Of Honor: Frontline	210	52%
MediEvil	173	45%
Mega Man 9	172	75%
Mega Man 10	192	82%
Metal Gear Solid	187	93%
Metal Gear Solid Online	175	45%
Microbot	202	51%
Monkey Island 2: Special Edition	195	94%
Motorhead	173	60%
Namco Museum Essentials	193	60%
Naruto Shippuden: Kizuna Drive	205	42%
NBA Jam: On Fire Edition	212	64%
Nights Into Dreams...	224	75%
Noby Noby Boy	177	85%
Nucleus	155	82%
Numblast	183	60%
N20	37	70%
Oddworld: Stranger's Wrath HD	214	86%
Okami HD	225	90%
 Okami is lovely, just as we remember it, and has been given a treatment that takes it far beyond the muffled visual quality of the PS2 original.		
Outland	207	72%
OutRun Online Arcade	180	80%
Pac-Man Championship Edition DX	201	91%
Payday: The Heist	213	88%
Pain	183	69%
Peggle	189	94%
Pinballistik	215	75%
PixelJunk 4am	220	40%
PixelJunk Eden	169	67%
PixelJunk Monsters	163	94%
PixelJunk Shooter	187	93%
PixelJunk Shooter 2	204	90%
PixelJunk SideScroller	213	77%
Piyotama	162	62%
Planet Minigolf	196	58%
Polar Panic	190	65%
Populous: The Beginning	46	70%
Prince Of Persia Classic	173	67%
Puddle	216	76%
The Punisher: No Mercy	182	49%
Puzzle Chronicles	194	70%
Puzzle Dimension	208	81%
Puzzle Quest Galactrix	181	68%
Q*bert	58	53%
Quantum Conundrum	221	90%
 If you loved Portal 2 you'll love this. Swapping portals for dimension altering, it's the same mix of physics-based puzzles and humour.		
Rag Doll Kung Fu Fists Of Plastic	179	83%
Rampage: World Tour	29	77%
Rainbow Moon	221	68%
Ratchet & Clank: Quest For Booty	170	69%
Rayman	01	76%

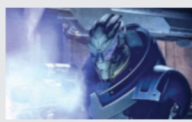
PS3'S BEST GAMES

MASS EFFECT 3

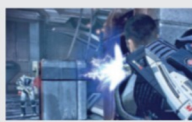
93%, PLAY 216



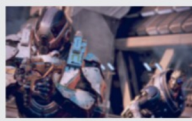
Waaah! The ending, waaah! Yawn. In the age of internet entitlement, people whinged about *Mass Effect 3*'s ambiguous ending until BioWare blinked and made a new one.



Thing is, they were neglecting the other 30 hours or so of brilliance in *Mass Effect 3*, with some of the most powerful storytelling and choices presented in any videogame to date.



We're not massive on the multiplayer and the presence of larger enemies threw the combat out of balance, but those are basically our only criticisms. This is masterful design from BioWare, and a great ending to the saga.

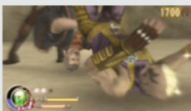


The idea that you can shape a character from start to finish is incomparably impressive – especially now that the original game is available on PS3 and you can run through the entire trilogy for the first time.



Is there room for a fourth one? Not in this particular storyline, but of course, it will happen at some point. This is by far BioWare's best-selling franchise, and looking back on the third, there's still a lot of potential for evolution.

DOWNLOAD THESE PS2 CLASSICS EDITION



GOD HAND

89%, Play 149

Build your own combos. Think of that! Shinji Mikami veered towards silliness with this refined beat-'em-up and it was a perfect fit. Do battle with dancing gorillas and a shorter version of the *Power Rangers*.



DEUS EX

87%, Play 88

Not at its best on PS2, admittedly, but this captures the essence of one of the best, most open first-person games ever created. *Human Revolution* was a fine imitator, yet the original is nevertheless still impressive.



GRAND THEFT AUTO: SAN ANDREAS

99%, Play 123

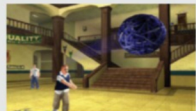
Although the tech might be old, *San Andreas* triumphs through its art style, which is extraordinary in its scope – playing it now will get you pumped for your return to Rockstar's version of California later this year.



MAXIMO

85%, Play 87

Rock hard but terrific fun, *Maximo* is a worthy Capcom reimagining of *Ghouls n Goblins* that was basically ignored by everyone except critics at the time. And now, actually. But we like it. So buy it!



CANIS CANEM EDIT

87%, Play 146

Bully is *GTA* in a school, basically, with one of the most detailed open world environments Rockstar has ever produced, as well as a cast of characters that ranks as the most memorable of Rockstar's games, mainly because they're all realistic spins on classic high-school archetypes.

game	issue	score
Rayman 3 HD	217	77%
Renegade Ops	211	78%
Resident Evil 4 HD	210	93%
One of the best games ever made comes to PSN. Unfortunately it also brings with it a rather high price tag.		
Resident Evil Code Veronica X	211	72%
Resident Evil Chronicles HD Collection	221	82%
Retro City Rampage	228	78%
Revenge Of The Wounded Dragons	191	60%
Rift: Everyday Shooter	162	86%
Risk: Factions	202	80%
Rock Band Blitz	223	80%
Rocketbirds: Hardboiled Chicken	212	82%
Rocket Knight	194	74%
Rocketmen: Axis Of Evil	165	63%
Sam & Max: The Devil's Playhouse Episode 1	194	90%
Sam & Max: The Devil's Playhouse Episode 2	194	92%
Sega Rally Online Arcade	208	74%
Savage Moon	175	87%
Scott Pilgrim vs The World	197	77%
The Secret Of Monkey Island SE	195	92%
Section 8	193	78%
Section 8: Prejudice	209	80%
Shank	197	86%
Shatter	183	91%
Sheep	171	78%
Shoot Many Robots	217	81%
The Simpsons: Arcade Game	216	54%
Siren Blood Curse	170	62%
Skullgirls	218	88%
Smash Cars	184	50%
SOCOM Confrontation	178	55%
Soldier X-2: Final Prototype	195	70%
Sonic Adventure	198	63%
Sonic Adventure 2	225	69%
Sonic CD	214	82%
Sonic The Hedgehog 4: Episode I	199	82%
Sonic The Hedgehog 4: Episode II	220	40%
Spin Jam	174	32%
Snakeball	176	92%
Stacking	203	88%
Star Trek: D-A-C	189	57%
Street Fighter Alpha: Warrior's Dream	159	57%
Street Fighter III: 3rd Strike Online Edition	199	92%
The best version of one of the best fighting games ever released, or something. We don't know, mainly because Ryan isn't writing this.		
Street Skater 2	178	40%
Super Puzzle Fighter II HD Turbo Remix	168	78%
Super Rub-A-Dub	151	83%
Supersonic: Arcade Rodent Powered Battle Cars	177	65%
Super Stardust HD	155	74%
Super Street Fighter II Turbo HD Remix	176	72%
Switchball	191	75%
Swords And Soldiers	199	88%
Syphon Filter	48	93%
Syphon Filter 3	170	80%
Tales Of Monkey Island	196	91%
Tank Battles	186	68%
Tekken HD	150	80%
Tekken 5: Dark Resurrection Online	161	87%
Tetris	202	84%
Theme Hospital	32	80%
Theme Park	174	80%
TMNT: Turtles in Time Re-shelled	186	57%
Toyko Jungle	223	81%
Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six	54	34%
Tony Hawk's Pro Skater HD	223	73%
Top Darts	202	71%
Top Gun	198	53%
Topspin: Spinning Through The Worlds	183	61%
ToyHome	162	31%
Trash Panic	181	79%
Trials Of Topoq	159	50%
Trine	184	85%
Turntable	198	70%
Uncharted: Fight For Fortune	227	83%
Under Siege	207	71%
The Unfinished Swan	225	78%
Uno	189	85%
Vagrant Story	189	82%
Vandal Hearts: Flames Of Judgment	192	87%
Virtua Fighter 5: Final Showdown	220	90%
The Walking Dead: Episode 1	219	89%
The Walking Dead: Episode 2	221	90%
The peak of Telltale's storytelling power, with increasingly difficult choices and great writing to back it up.		

*denotes import review

game	issue	score
The Walking Dead: Episode 3	223	86%
Wakeboarding HD	192	65%
Warhawk	225	48%
Warhawk: Operation Fallen Star	171	80%
Watchmen: The End Is Nigh	183	55%
Who Wants To Be A Millionaire?	214	79%
WipeOut	01	89%
WipeOut HD	172	84%
Wizorb	222	78%
Wolfenstein	181	70%
Wonder Boy In Monster Land	220	50%
Worms	179	91%
Worms 2: Armageddon	198	87%
Worms Battle Islands	201	80%
Worms Crazy Golf	213	82%
Worms: Ultimate Mayhem	217	80%
X-Men Arcade	203	60%
Yars' Revenge	206	57%
Zack Zero	215	73%
Zen Pinball 2	224	90%
The finest pinball game we've seen in a long time, but in a newer, sharper, updated fashion. Yay pinball!		
Zombie Apocalypse: Never Die Alone	213	69%
Zuma	182	78%

PSP LISTING

The 3rd Birthday	203	80%
300: March To Glory	152	59%
Ace Combat X	147	72%
Ace Combat: Joint Assault	194	79%
After Burner: Black Falcon	152	82%
Ape Academy 2	145	52%
Ape Escape P	140	37%
Army Of Two: The 40th Day	190	45%
Assassin's Creed: Bloodlines	187	77%
Astonishia Story	142	68%
Beaterator	186	72%
Blade Dancer: Lineage Of Light	145	45%
BlazBlue: Calamity Trigger Portable	194	84%
Blood Bowl	184	53%
Bombberman	150	83%
Boulder Dash: Rocks!	165	69%
Breath Of Fire III	138	82%
Brothers In Arms: D-Day	149	69%
Burnout Dominator	153	65%
Burnout Legends	134	94%
Buzz! Brain Bender	175	68%
Capcom Classics Collection Reloaded	147	80%
Capcom Classics Collection Remixed	141	72%
Cars	143	60%
Castlevania: The Dracula X Chronicles	163	78%
Championship Manager	137	65%
Championship Manager 2006	140	32%
Cid The Dummy	180	32%
Coded Arms	134	53%
Call Of Duty: Roads To Victory	153	69%
Colin McRae Rally 2005 Plus	134	84%
The Con	153	59%
Crisis Core: Final Fantasy VII	167	87%
Crush	154	80%
The Cube	153	64%
Dante's Inferno	191	76%
Dead Or Alive: Paradise	192	56%
Diagnosis: Afternoon Of Darkness	161	92%
Dissidia: Final Fantasy	184	60%
Dissidia 012 Final Fantasy	203	79%
Diagea 2: Dark Hero Days	190	87%
Dragon Ball Z: Shin Budokai 2	154	50%
Driver 76	154	68%
Dungeons & Dragons: Tactics	159	55%
Dungeon Siege: Throne Of Agony	148	85%
Dynasty Warriors: Strikeforce	179	69%
EA Replay	147	74%
echochrome	169	85%
echosift	191	73%
Everybody's Golf 2	167	86%
Everybody's Tennis	195	88%
Every Extend Extra	145	84%
Exit	138	65%
The Eye Of Judgment: Legends	191	57%
EyePet	199	77%
Fi 2009	187	66%
Fate/Extra	219	60%
Field Commander	145	83%
FIFA 06	136	43%
FIFA 07	147	81%

game	issue	score
FIFA 11	198	69%
FIFA World Cup 2010	193	65%
Fired Up	134	60%
Final Fantasy	164	63%
Final Fantasy III	224	44%
Final Fantasy IV: The Complete Collection	204	80%
Final Fantasy Tactics	159	86%
FlatOut: Head On	164	79%
Football Manager 2007	147	62%
Football Manager Handheld 2008	161	49%
Football Manager Handheld 2010	187	60%
Formula One 06	143	78%
Frantix	136	36%
Gangs Of London	144	65%
Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter 2	157	42%
Ghost Recon Predator	200	60%
Ghostbusters: The Video Game	188	55%
Ghostbusters: Sanctum Of Slime	204	51%
Gitaroo Man Lives!	144	79%
Gladiator Begins	206	52%
Go! Sudoku	137	45%
The Godfather: Mob Wars	136	66%
Gods Eater Burst	202	88%
God Of War: Chains Of Olympus	165	84%
God Of War: Ghost Of Sparta	199	79%
Gradius Collection	144	80%
Grun Turismo	184	85%
Grand Theft Auto: Chinatown Wars	185	95%
GTA: Liberty City Stories	135	95%
GTA: Vice City Stories	147	96%
Half-Minute Hero	191	87%
Hard Corps: Uprising	204	78%
Harry Potter And The Goblet Of Fire	136	69%
HELLBORN: Science Of Evil	170	60%
Holy Invasion Of Privacy, Badman!	186	73%
What Did I Do To Deserve This?	155	73%
Hot Pixel	181	60%
Indiana Jones And The Staff Of Kings	141	68%
Infected	154	70%
Innocent Life: A Futuristic Harvest Moon	170	40%
International Athletics	150	70%
Invizimals	187	75%
Jak And Daxter: The Lost Frontier	157	59%
Jeopardy! Eliminator	141	70%
Juiced 2: Hot Import Nights	160	80%
Kao Challeengers	137	60%
Killzone: Liberation	146	83%
Kingdom Hearts: Birth By Sleep	196	88%
The Legend Of Heroes: Trails In The Sky	214	75%
Lemmings	138	63%
LittleBigPlanet	186	90%
LocoRoco	143	94%
LocoRoco 2	173	82%
LocoRoco Midnight Carnival	186	81%
Lord Of Arcana	202	65%
The Lord Of The Rings: Tactics	136	66%
Lumines II	137	74%
Madden NFL 06	137	74%
Marvel Trading Cards	155	38%
Me And My Katamari	138	86%
Medal Of Honor Heroes	147	72%
MediEvil: Resurrection	134	53%
Mercury Meltdown	145	66%
Metal Slug Anthology	150	91%
Metal Gear Acid 2	138	92%
Metal Gear Solid: Peace Walker	193	92%
Metal Gear Solid: Portable Ops	150	91%
Miami Vice	144	82%
Micro Machines V4	142	71%
Might & Magic: Clash Of Heroes	205	84%
ModNation Racers	193	70%
Monster Hunter Freedom	140	81%
Monster Hunter Freedom 2	157	59%
Monster Hunter Freedom Unite	181	77%
Moon Diver	205	46%
MotoGP	146	75%
Motorstorm: Arctic Edge	184	72%
Myrtrian Wars	179	58%
Namco Museum Battle Collection	135	68%
Naruto Shippuden Legends	185	46%
Naruto Ultimate Ninja Heroes 2	169	46%
NBA Ballers: Rebound	139	61%
Need For Speed Undercover	175	57%
No Heroes Allowed	199	69%
OutRun 2006: Coast 2 Coast	139	93%
PaRappa The Rapper	155	88%
Patapon	163	86%
Patapon 2	177	87%
Patapon 3	205	81%
Patchwork Heroes	192	85%

game	issue	score
Persona 2: Innocent Sin	214	65%
Pirates Of The Caribbean	143	52%
PixelJunk Monster Deluxe	185	86%
Pro Evolution Soccer 2008	163	77%
Pocket Racers	144	49%
PoPoLoCrois	142	71%
Power Stone Collection	145	88%
PQ - Practical Intelligence Quotient	141	52%
Prince Of Persia Revelations	138	69%
Prince Of Persia: The Forgotten Sands	194	52%
Prinny: Can I Really Be The Hero?	181	80%
PSN Collection: Power Pack	173	70%
PSN Collection: Puzzle Pack	173	54%
Pursuit Force	134	83%
Pursuit Force: Extreme Justice	159	76%
Puzzle Chronicles	190	61%
Puzzle Quest	153	66%
R-Type Tactics	170	74%
Rainbow Six Vegas	156	78%
Ratchet & Clank: Size Matters	154	78%
Red Faction: Battlezone	205	78%
Rengoku 2	144	72%
Resistance: Retribution	177	76%
Ridge Racer 2	145	78%
Ridge Racer	132	91%
Rock Band Unplugged	181	92%
Rocky Balboa	150	68%
Secret Agent Clank	169	79%
Sega Mega Drive Collection	177	79%
Sega Rally	158	90%
Shin Megami Tensei: Persona 3 Portable	206	78%
Shinobi: Tales Of The Ninja	150	60%
Silent Hill Origins	160	87%
Silent Hill: Shattered Memories	190	52%
The Sims 2	137	71%
Slam Bolt Scrappers	204	73%
Smash Court Tennis	154	58%
SOCOM Fire Team 2	154	70%
SOCOM: Fireteam Bravo 3	190	71%
SOCOM: Tactical Strike	160	85%
SOCOM: US Navy SEALs Fireteam Bravo	140	69%
Sonic Rivals	147	70%
Sonic Rivals 2	162	35%
SoulCalibur: Broken Destiny	183	92%
Spider-Man 3	162	32%
Spinout	149	81%
Splinter Cell: Essentials	139	71%
Split/Second: Velocity	200	71%
SSX On Tour	138	76%
Star Ocean: Second Evolution	178	78%
Star Trek: Tactical Assault	148	59%
Star Wars Battlefront II	137	74%
Star Wars Battlefront: Elite Squadron	187	65%
Star Wars: Lethal Alliance	148	69%
Star Wars: Renegade Squadron	160	78%
Street Fighter Alpha 3 Max	138	70%
Street Riders	140	29%
Super Monkey Ball Adventure	142	54%
Swarm	204	78%
Syphon Filter: Dark Mirror	140	90%
Tekken 6	187	90%
Tekken: Dark Resurrection	143	92%
Tactics Ogre: Let Us Cling Together	202	81%
Tenchu: Shadow Assassins	179	71%
Tenchu: Time Of The Assassins	146	51%
TNA Impact: Cross The Line	189	58%
TOCA 3	152	70%
Tokobot	140	79%
Tomb Raider: Anniversary	156	81%
Tomb Raider: Legend	140	72%
Twisted Metal Head-On	134	54%
UFC Undisputed 2010	197	80%
Ultimate Ghosts 'N Goblins	145	88%
Undead Knights	189	46%
Untold Legends: The Warrior's Code	140	59%
Valhalla Knights	158	49%
Valkyria Chronicles 2	196	87%
Valkyrie Profile: Lenneth	153	78%
Viewtiful Joe: Red Hot Rumble	140	82%
Virtua Tennis 3	152	88%
Warhammer 40,000: Squad Command	161	70%
What Did I Do To Deserve This My Lord? 2	192	78%
WipEout Pulse	159	86%
Wipeout Pure	138	91%
World Of Pool	156	43%
World Tour Poker	141	67%
World Tour Soccer 2	142	40%
Worms: Open Warfare 2	157	80%
WWE SmackDown! vs Raw 2006	137	84%
WWE SmackDown! vs Raw 2007	147	80%
World Rally Championship	134	67%



SAM ROBERTS
WHAT HAVE THEY BEEN PLAYING?
LA NOIRE
WHY WAS IT CHOSEN?
Trophy whoring

I THINK *LA Noire* offers one of the most compelling storytelling experiences on PS3, even with the occasional logic gaps of the cases. It creates a level of credible drama and a sense of place that few other games are able to match - it's like playing a TV show, where it's good to dip into a couple of episodes then come back another day for more. Having beaten it a second time, I respect Team Bondi's ambition in creating a story that's technically several steps ahead of everything else.



PLAYING THE PLAYLIST

2013 trundles on, and our gaming tastes are typically brilliant as we wait for the PS4...



SAM SMITH
WHAT HAVE THEY BEEN PLAYING?
DMC: DEVIL MAY CRY
WHY WAS IT CHOSEN?
Beating all difficulty modes

I'VE BEEN PLAYING *DmC* solidly since release and I'm still having a great time. The core of all *Devil May Cry* titles has been mastering the combat system and tackling the game at progressively higher difficulty levels. *DmC*'s initial offerings might be quite easy, but once you unlock some harder settings, things get pretty challenging. I won't rest until I've beaten Hell and Hell mode!

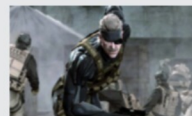


PLAY'S BEST GAMES IF YOU LIKE...



Bad endings to good games
PLAY: ENSLAVED: ODYSSEY TO THE WEST

Andy Serkis rules the universe! Oh, spoilers. That's basically the end of *Enslaved* for you, right there. The journey within the story is as such that we don't mind too much, though.



Long outcurses
PLAY: METAL GEAR SOLID 4: GUNS OF THE PATRIOTS
Replaying this recently, it's almost offensive how long those mission briefings are, even if the ensuing gameplay of *MGS4* is always rich enough to justify the wait. There's about four films worth of stuff in here.

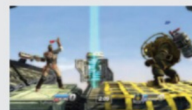


Train sections
PLAY: UNCHARTED 2: AMONG THIEVES

Is this the best set-piece on PlayStation 3? Yes, we think it is - *Uncharted 2* peaks with the train chase, a near-endless joyride that puts everything in *Indiana Jones And The Kingdom Of The Crystal Skull* to shame.



The American Dream
PLAY: GRAND THEFT AUTO IV
Poor Niko Bellic, walking the streets of Liberty City and firing his rocket launcher at taxis, blissfully unaware he'll never really be able to start a new life while he's pulling off bank robberies.



Simple but decent fighting
PLAY: PS ALL-STAR
Okay, so no-one bought *PlayStation All-Stars* - that's a real shame to us, given how rich the PlayStation reverence is within the game. It's cheap out there, now. Pick it up.

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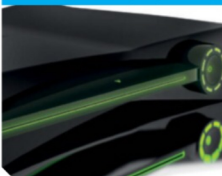
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